

The Book of
THE THOUSAND NIGHTS
and ONE NIGHT



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"The Tale of Genji Abdalla & Sea Abdallu"

The Book of
THE THOUSAND NIGHTS
and ONE NIGHT

Rendered from the literal and complete
version of Dr. J. C. Mardrus;
and collated with other
sources; by

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THE TALE OF ABU KIR AND ABU SIR

SHAHRAZADE SAID:

IT IS RELATED, O auspicious King, that there were once in Alexandria a dyer, called Abu Kir, and a barber, named Abu Sir, who had neighbouring shops in the market.

Abu Kir was a notorious rascal, a detestable liar, and a man of exceedingly ill life. His temples must have been hewn of indestructible granite and his head formed from one of the steps of the church of Jews; otherwise how are we to explain the shameless audacity which he displayed in all his sins? Among countless other pieces of roguery, he used to make most of his clients pay in advance, alleging that he had need of ready money to buy colours . . . and that was the last they saw of their stuffs which they had brought to be dyed. He not only spent the money in pleasant eating and drinking, but also secretly sold the stuffs which had been trusted to him and bought himself amusements of a high order with the proceeds. When the customers came to claim their goods, he would find one pretext or another to make them wait indefinitely. Thus he would say to one: "As Allah lives, my master, my wife lay in yesterday and I had to be up and down upon my feet all the time."

Or to another: "I had guests yesterday and all my time was taken up with them; but if you come back in two days the stuff will be ready for you." He drew out every piece of business which came his way to such extravagant lengths that at last one of his victims would be bound to cry: "Come, tell me the truths about my stuffs. Give them back, for I have decided not to have them dyed." "Alas, I am in despair!" Abu Kir would answer, lifting his hands to heaven, swearing every imaginable oath that he would tell the truth, beating his hands together and weeping. "Dear master," he would sob, "as soon as your stuffs were most beautifully dyed, I hung them on the drying cords outside my shop; I turned away for a moment to piss and when I looked again they had disappeared! If you ask me, I think they were stolen by my neighbour, that most dishonest barber." Then, if the customer were a fine fellow, he would say: "Allah will make good the loss!" and go his way; if he were irritable, he would probably swear at the dyer and come to blows with him in the open street. But even so, and in spite of the kadi's authority, no one ever got back his stuffs; because, in the first place, proof was lacking that they had been given, and, in the second, there was nothing in the dyer's shop worth seizing. For a long time Abu Kir gained a livelihood in this way; but the day came when every merchant and private individual in that quarter had been victimised, and Abu Kir saw his credit broken beyond repair and his business ruined. He had become so general an object of mistrust that his name has passed into a proverb when anyone wished to speak of bad faith.

When he was reduced to the last straits, Abu Kir sat down before the shop of his neighbour, the barber

Abu Sir, and complained that starvation stared him in the face. At once the barber, who walked in Allah's way and who, though poor, was unusually honest, had compassion on Abu Kir, and said: "There is a duty from one neighbour to another. Stay with me here; eat, drink, and use the gifts of Allah until the coming of better days." With that he took him into his house and supplied all his needs for a very long time.

One day the barber, Abu Sir, complained to the dyer, Abu Kir, of the hard times, saying: "Brother, I am far from being a clumsy barber, I know my business and my hand is light; but, because my shop is poor and I am poor, no one comes to be shaved. Perhaps in the morning at the hammam some porter or fireman gets me to shave his armpits or apply the paste to his groin. Thus I earn a few copper pieces, which hardly feed me and you and the family which hangs about my neck. But Allah is great and generous!" "Brother," answered Abu Kir, "you must be very simple to endure hardships so patiently when you have the means to get rich and live largely. Your trade fails and mine is ruined because of the malevolence of our fellow citizens; therefore our best plan is to leave this cruel country and voyage until we find some city where our arts will be appreciated. Travel is a rare thing; how pleasant it is to breathe good air, to forget the crosses of life, to see new lands, fresh cities, to learn to drive a thriving foreign trade in businesses honoured throughout the world, as are yours and mine! Remember that a poet said:

*What's danger, so the feet may roam
Beyond the town where custom is?
Better be dead than stay at home,*

*A flea with lice for enemies . . .
Invite your soul to voyages,
For at the gates of new found lands
Wait raptures and discoveries
And gold with laughter in her hands.*

Let us shut our shops and set forth together to seek a better fortune." He went on to speak so eloquently that Abu Sir was convinced and hastened to make his preparations for departure. These consisted in wrapping his basins, razors, scissors, and iron in an old piece of patched cloth and saying goodbye to his family. When he returned to the shop, the dyer said to him: "Now it only remains to recite the opening chapter of the Koran, to prove that we are brothers, and to agree that each shall put his profits into a common fund, to be equally divided when we return to Alexandria. We should also have an undertaking that whichever of us finds work shall agree to provide for the other, if he cannot earn for himself." The barber Abu Sir subscribed to these conditions and the two recited the opening chapter of the Koran to seal their bond.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Four-hundred-and-eighty-eighth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

ABU SIR SHUT his shop and returned the key to its owner, paying his rent in full; then the two walked down to the port and embarked, entirely without pro-

vision of food, on board a boat which was about to sail.

Fate favoured them during the voyage, using the barber as its instrument. Among the passengers and crew, who numbered a hundred and forty souls, there was no other barber than Abu Sir; so, when the ship was well started, the barber said to his companion: "My brother, we need food and drink. I shall go now and offer my services to the passengers and sailors, in case one should wish to have his head shaved. If I can earn bread or money or a cup of water, so much the better for both of us." "Go then," answered the dyer, and straightway arranged his head more comfortably and went to sleep upon the deck.

Abu Sir, throwing a rag over his shoulder as a napkin and taking in his hands the tools of his trade and an empty cup, began to walk among the passengers. "Come and shave my head, O master," said one of them and, when the business was done, would have given the barber money. "My brother," said Abu Sir, "money is of little good to me at sea. I would rather have a crust of bread, for my friend and I have no food." The man gave him a crust of bread, a piece of cheese, and a fill of water for the cup. Abu Sir took these things to the dyer, saying: "Take this crust and eat it with the cheese. Also here is water." Abu Kir ate and drank until there was nothing left, while Abu Sir renewed his wandering among the passengers who squatted or lay about the ship. He shaved one or two for rolls, another for a piece of cheese, another for a cucumber, another for a slice of watermelon, another for a piece of money. By the end of the day he had amassed thirty rolls, thirty half dirhams, much cheese, and a quantity of olives, cucumbers, and excellent botargoes made from the fish roe

of Damietta. Also, he had so attracted the sympathy of the passengers that he could have asked anything of them, and had become so popular that his skill reached as far as the ears of the captain. Abu Sir shaved the captain's head, complaining the while of the miseries of poverty and telling him that he had a travelling-companion to support. The captain, who was an open-handed man and had been, moreover, delighted by the charming manners and great dexterity of this new barber, invited him to come with his friend every evening while the voyage lasted and dine at his own cloth.

The dyer was sleeping when the barber returned, and woke to find great store of rolls, cheese, melons, cucumbers and botargoes piled by his head. "Where do these come from?" he asked; and Abu Sir answered: "From the generosity of Allah (may His name be exalted!)." At once the dyer threw himself upon all the foods at one and the same time, as if he would have shovelled the lot down into his dear love, his stomach. But the barber said: "Do not eat these things, my brother, for they may be useful in the future; in the meanwhile, the captain has asked both of us to dine with him this very evening." "I have the seasickness and cannot leave my place," objected Abu Kir, "Go you to dine with the captain and let me peck a little at these simple things." "Certainly," answered the barber and passed the time until dinner in watching his companion eat.

The dyer attacked and bit into the food, as a quarryman splits stones, and swallowed with the noise of an elephant who has fasted for many days and at last takes his fill with gurglings of the throat and belly rumblings. Mouthful came to the help of mouthful, pushing it through the doors of his throat; gobbet

jostled gobbet in the going down; and the dyer's eyes fastened like those of a ghou! upon each handful as it went to the mouth. He breathed and bellowed like a bull which sees its hay or beans.

While this meal was in progress a sailor came and bade the two men to dinner. "Will you come with me?" asked Abu Sir; but Abu Kir answered: "I fear I have not the strength to move. This seasickness is the devil." So the barber went alone and saw the captain sitting before a cloth on which were spread twenty or more exquisite different-coloured dishes. He only waited for the arrival of the barber and certain other guests before beginning his repast.

At this point Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Four-hundred-and-eighty-ninth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

SEEING THE BARBER ALONE, the captain asked after his friend and Abu Sir replied that the dyer was seasick. "That will soon pass," said the captain, "sit down by me in the name of Allah." He took a large plate and filled it so liberally with the varied meats that each portion would have been enough for ten people. When the barber had finished eating, the captain handed him a second plate, loaded like the first, saying: "Take this to your companion." Abu Sir did so and found Abu Kir still working away with his fangs and crunching with his jaws like a camel, while enormous hunks followed each other down into the mighty gulf. "Did I not tell you not to blunt your

appetite with these simple things?" said Abu Sir, "See what admirable food the captain has sent you! What do you say to these excellent *kababs* of lamb?" "Give them to me," growled Abu Kir; and at once delved into the plate and fell to eating from both hands with the greed of a wolf, the swiftness of a lion, the ferocity of a vulture among pigeons, and the furious stuffing noises of a starved pig. In a few moments he had licked the plate clean and had handed it back to Abu Sir, who returned it to the servant and then, after drinking a little with the captain, lay down to sleep by the dyer, who snored through all his vents, drowning the noise of the sea.

Next day and on the following days, Abu Sir spent his time in shaving the passengers and sailors, laying by provisions, dining with the captain, and generously providing for his friend. Abu Kir contented himself with sleeping, rousing only to eat or pass what he had eaten. Thus they lived for twenty days and, on the morning of the twenty-first, the ship came to harbour in an unknown city.

Abu Kir and Abu Sir went ashore and, after hiring a small room in a khan, hastened to furnish it with a new mat and two linen covers, for which the barber paid. As Abu Kir still complained of seasickness, the barber left him sleeping and carried his instruments into the city where he exercised his profession at the corner of streets; at first on porters, donkey-boys, scavengers, and street sellers; but, later, on well-to-do merchants who were attracted by the rumour of his skill. He returned in the evening and set various foods before his sleeping companion; then he woke the dyer by holding the roast lamb under his nose, and both ate until they were satisfied. Things went on in this way for forty whole days, with Abu Kir

complaining all the time of the remnants of his seasickness and Abu Sir setting rich foods for the joint meal twice a day. The dyer would wolf rolls, cucumbers, fresh onions, and *kababs* without ever unduly loading that mistress of his, that enormous stomach; but, if ever the barber spoke to him of the unparalleled beauties of the city and invited him to walk in the markets or gardens, he would answer: "That seasickness is still upon me," and then, having belched and farted in different strains and odours, would fall again into his sleep. And all this time the good and honest barber did not once upbraid his crapulous parasite.

At the end of the forty days, however, the barber fell ill and, being unable any longer to go out to work, begged the doorkeeper of the khan to look after Abu Kir and buy him such food as he needed. In the course of a few days, Abu Sir became so much worse that he lost consciousness and lay like one dead. It resulted that Abu Kir began to feel the pinch of hunger and was obliged to rise from his couch and hunt in the room for something to eat. But, as he never left scraps, he found nothing; without compunction he searched through his companion's clothes and at last found a purse in which the poor man had hoarded up his gains, copper by copper. Abu Kir fastened this to his belt and, without giving the barber another thought, walked from the room and fastened the door behind him. As the doorkeeper was for the moment absent, he did not see Abu Kir go out.

The dyer's first care was to run to a pastry-cook's where he ate a whole dish of *kenafa* and another of shortbread flakes; these he washed down with a pitcher of musked sherbert and another of sherbert prepared with amber and jujubes.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Four-hundred-and-ninetieth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THEN HE WENT to the market and bought fine clothes and accoutrements, which he put on before taking a slow walk through the streets and delighting his eyes with the novelties of that unusual city. One thing struck him especially; all the inhabitants, without a single exception, were clothed in uniform colours, either white or blue. There were only white or blue stuffs in the shops, only white or blue perfumes in the flasks of the distillers; the kohl was blue, and the sherbert sellers sold only white, not red or rose or violet as with us. The greatest of all his surprises came when he looked in through the door of a dyer's shop and saw that the vats held nothing but indigo. Not being able to curb his curiosity, he entered the shop and, drawing a white handkerchief from his pocket, gave it to the dyer, saying: "O master of the trade, for how much will you dye this handkerchief? and what colour will you give it?" The dyer replied: "I will do it for twenty dirhams; indigo blue, of course." "What," cried Abu Kir at this outrageous demand, "twenty dirhams for dyeing a single handkerchief blue? Half a dirham would be the price in my country." "In that case," answered the dyer, "go and have it dyed in your own country; you will not get it done for less than twenty dirhams in this place." "If that is so, I will pay," said Abu Kir, "but I want red not blue." "What do you mean by red?" asked

the man, "There is no such thing as red dye." "Then dye it green," said the astonished Abu Kir. "Green dye? There is no such thing," answered the dyer. "Yellow, then," ventured Abu Kir, but "I have never heard of a yellow dye!" cried the dyer. So Abu Kir enumerated all the shades of the various dyes which he knew and, when he perceived that the man did not understand a word of what he said, asked if all the other dyers in the city were as ignorant. "There are forty of us," answered the man, "we have formed a closed guild, so that no one else in the city may practise our art. The secret is carefully guarded and only handed down from father to son. We have never heard tell of any dye save blue."

"O master of the trade," said Abu Kir, "I also am a dyer; but I dye in an infinity of colours of which you know nothing. Take me into your employ for a small wage and I will teach you the secrets, so that your knowledge will bring you glory among all your guild." "We are not allowed to employ strangers," objected the man. "What would happen, then," asked Abu Kir, "if I opened a dyer's shop on my own account?" "That would be impossible!" cried the man of indigo. Abu Kir said nothing further and left the shop; he sought out a second dyer, then a third, and then a fourth, until he had visited all in the city; but everywhere he met with the same answers and a blank refusal to employ him either as master or apprentice. He then took his complaint to the venerable syndic of the guild, who said: "I can do nothing. Our custom and traditions forbid us to receive a stranger."

Abu Kir's liver swelled with fury; he hurried to the palace and presented himself before the king of that city, saying: "O king of time, I am a stranger, a

dye by trade, and I can dye in forty different colours . . .”

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Four-hundred-and-ninety-first Night
Had Came*

SHE SAID:

“AND YET I HAVE received such and such treatment from the dyers of this city who know no other colour but blue. I can give the most charming shades of every colour to any fabrics: reds of all kinds, as rose and jujube; greens of all kinds, as grass, pistachio, olive, and parakeet; blacks of all kinds, as charcoal, pitch, and kohl; yellows of all kinds, as citron, orange, lemon, and gold. All these colours and more I have at my command, and yet the dyers of this city will have none of me.”

When the king heard this prodigious enumeration of colours, whose existence he had never suspected, he trembled with joy and cried: “As Allah lives, this is excellent! If you are telling the truth and can rejoice our eyes with all these marvellous colours, banish all care from your heart; for I will myself open a dye works for you and give you much money with which to start in business. Have no concern for the fellows of the guild; if one of them is so unfortunate as to molest you he shall hang at the door of his own shop.” At once he called the architects of the palace to him, and said to them: “Go with this admirable master throughout all the city and, when he has found a site to his liking, whether there stand on it a shop,

a khan, a house, or a garden, turn out the owner and build upon that place, as quickly as you are able, a great dye works with forty large vats and forty smaller ones. Follow the instructions of this master dyer in everything; be very careful not to think one thought of disobedience to any of his orders." Then the king gave Abu Kir a fair robe of honour and a purse of a thousand dinars, saying: "Spend this money on your pleasures until the new works are finished." He also presented him with two boys to wait upon him and a marvellous horse, saddled with blue velvet and with housings of blue silk. Finally he placed at his disposal a great and richly furnished house, served by a suitable multitude of slaves.

Next day Abu Kir, looking as fine and majestic as some emir in his dazzling brocade and on his costly horse, rode out preceded by two architects and the two boys to clear a way for him, and visited all the streets and markets in search of a suitable site for his new works. At last he chose a vast vaulted shop in the middle of the chief market; at once the architects and slaves drove out the owner and began to build in one direction and tear down in another under the orders of Abu Kir. Still mounted on his horse, he said: "Do such and such here; do such and such over there"; and, in a very short time, there rose a dye works unequalled over all the face of the earth.

Then the king called him, and said: "Now it only remains for you to start work; but that cannot be done without money. Here are five thousand dinars of gold to begin with. And remember that I am all impatience to behold the first fruits of your art." Abu Kir hid the five thousand dinars carefully in his house and, with a few dirhams, bought from a druggist all the necessary colours, which remained unsold in their

virgin sacks and were to be had for next to nothing. These he had taken to his new premises, where he carefully prepared and diluted them in the vats.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Four-hundred-and-ninety-second Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THE KING SENT him five hundred white squares in silk, wool, and linen, which Abu Kir dyed, some in pure colour, others with mingled, so that not one looked like the other. He hung them out to dry on the lines which had been prepared all along the street outside his shop, and the varied pieces lived under the light and made a gay showing in the sunshine.

All the people of the city were abashed by this novelty; shop-keepers shut their shops to run and see, women and children gave shrill cries of admiration, and one man after another would ask Abu Kir the names of the colours. "That is pomegranate red," he would answer, "that is oil green, that is citron yellow." He called over all the colours to a crowd which showed its limitless admiration, with lifted arms and exclamations of delight.

In the middle of this excitement appeared the king, riding through the crowd, preceded by runners who cleared a path for him, and followed by a guard of honour. At sight of the fabrics flaunting their bright colours in the white air, his soul was ravished within him and he stayed motionless for a long time without breathing, showing the whites of his eyes in ecstasy.

Even the horses, instead of being frightened by such an unaccustomed spectacle, showed that they were sensible to beautiful colour and began to dance from side to side as if this flapping glory were the sound of fifes.

Not knowing how else sufficiently to honour his dyer, the king made his grand-wazir descend from his horse and set Abu Kir in the saddle; when the stuffs had been wrapped up, he returned to his palace, with the dyer riding on his right, and there loaded his new favourite with gold and privilege. From the dyed fabrics he had robes tailored for himself, his wives, and the chiefs of his palace, while he gave a thousand new squares to Abu Kir to be dyed in the same fashion. At the end of a certain time, all the emirs and officers of the city were wearing many-coloured garments and Abu Kir, dyer by appointment to the king, had become the richest man in the city. The other dyers, headed by the syndic of their guild, came to excuse themselves before their rival and begged him to employ them as unpaid apprentices. But he sent them away with shame. Before long the streets and markets were crowded by folk wearing fabrics of splendid colours, the work of Abu Kir, the royal dyer. So much for him.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Four-hundred-and-ninety-third Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

WHEN ABU SIR, the barber, had been robbed and deserted by the dyer, he lay half dead for three days. At the end of that time the doorkeeper of the khan,

having seen neither of the lodgers come out, said to himself: "Perhaps they have slipped away without paying, or perhaps they are dead, or perhaps, again, it is something quite different." He went to their room and, finding the wooden key turned in the lock of the door, from behind which came a feeble groaning, he entered and found the barber lying, yellow and unrecognisable, upon his mat. "What ails you, my brother? What has become of your companion?" he asked; and the poor barber answered in a weak whisper: "Only Allah knows! I have just come to myself; I do not know how long I have been here. I am very thirsty, my brother; I beg you to take the purse from my belt and buy me something which will strengthen me." The doorkeeper rummaged the belt throughout all its length and, finding no money, understood that the barber had been robbed by his fellow lodger. "Take no thought for your sustenance," he said, "Allah will judge each according to his works. From now on, I take your cure into my own hands." He hastened to prepare a good soup which he poured into a bowl and carried to his patient. He fed him with his own hands and then wrapped him in a woollen covering so that he sweated. For two months he cared for him, paying all the expenses of his nourishment out of his own pocket, so that at last Allah performed a complete cure through him and Abu Sir was able to rise. He said to the good doorkeeper: "If ever the Highest gives me the power I shall know how to reward you for your bountiful care of me; and yet, O chosen one, only He is rich enough to give you all that you deserve." "Praise Him for your cure, my brother," answered the old doorkeeper, "it is because I seek His face that I have acted as I did." The barber would have kissed his hands, but the saviour

The Tale of Abu Kir and Abu Sir

protested, and the two parted, calling down, each upon the other, all the blessings of Allah.

Leaving the khan with his bundle of instruments, the barber wandered through the markets until Fate led him to Abu Kir's dye works, which were surrounded by a crowd who acclaimed the colours of the stuffs hung out to dry. He asked one of the bystanders the meaning of the crowd, and the man answered: "This is the shop of our lord Abu Kir, the sultan's dyer. It is he who has produced these admirable colours by hidden processes and secret art."

Abu Sir's heart rejoiced for his old companion and he said to himself: "Thanks be to Allah who has opened for him the gate of riches! O Abu Sir, you were very wrong to think ill of him. If he left you and forgot you, it was from preoccupation in his work. If he borrowed your purse it was to buy colours with. Now you will see how cordially he will receive you and repay those services which you did him in his need. How he will rejoice to see you!" Abu Sir succeeded in worming his way through the crowd until he was at the door of the shop. Looking inside, he saw Abu Kir stretched lazily on a high diwan, supported by a pile of cushions and dressed in a garment fit for kings. Behind him stood four young black slaves and four young white slaves, richly habited; so that he seemed more majestic than a wazir and taller than a sultan. Ten workmen were labouring at the vats, taking their orders by signs from the master dyer.

Abu Sir took a step forward and paused before his comrade. "I will wait till he lowers his eyes," he thought, "and then salute him. Perhaps he will greet me first and throw himself upon my neck and console me."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Four-hundred-and-ninety-fourth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

HARDLY HAD THEIR looks crossed and eye met eye than the dyer leapt to his feet, crying: "Wretched thief, how often have I forbidden you to pause before my shop? Do you want to ruin and disgrace me? Hi, there, you men, seize him!"

The white and black slaves leapt upon the unfortunate barber, threw him to the ground and trampled upon him; the dyer rose and took up a great stick, saying: "Stretch him on his belly!" When this was done, he beat him a hundred times across the back and then, after he had been turned over, a hundred times across the belly. "Foul traitor," he cried, "if ever I see you before my shop again, I will send you to the king who will flay and impale you in front of the palace gates! Begone with the curse of Allah, O pitch face!" The wretched barber, humbled and in pain, heart-broken by such treachery, dragged himself away weeping, followed by the howls and curses of the crowd.

When he came to his lodging he stretched himself on his mat and reflected all night, in bitter grief and pain, upon Abu Kir's evil conduct. In the morning his stripes were a little cooled and he was able to rise. He went out into the street with the intention of taking a bath at the hammam to assuage his scars and wash away the taint of his long illness. He accosted a passer, saying: "My brother, what is the way to

the hammam?" "The hammam? What is a hammam?" asked the man. Then said Abu Sir: "It is a place where one washes and removes the impurities and old skin of the body. It is the most delicious spot in all the world." "Go and bathe in the water of the sea," said the other, "that is where we take our baths." "It is a hammam bath that I wish," objected Abu Sir; and the man replied: "We do not know what you mean by a hammam. When we wish to take a bath we go to the sea; even the king does so when he needs to wash."

When Abu Sir thus learnt that the people of the city knew nothing of hot baths and rubbing, of thorough cleansing and depilation, he went to the king's palace and demanded an audience. After kissing the sultan's hands and calling down blessings upon him: "O king of time," he said, "I am a stranger, a barber by trade, but I am also skilled in other employments, having had practice in the work of a hammam fireman and a rubber; although, in my country, each of these professions belong to different sorts of men who keep to them throughout all their lives. Today I wished to visit the hammam of your city, but none could tell me the way or even understand the word. It is very astonishing that a beautiful city like yours should have no hammam, for a hammam is the chief ornament and centre of delight in any city. In fact, O king of time, the hammam is an earthly paradise." "But what is this hammam of which you speak?" asked the astonished king, "I have never heard of it." "O king of time," answered Abu Sir, "a hammam is a building constructed in such and such a fashion, people bathe there in such and such a manner, and experience such and such delights when such and such things are done to them."

Then he expounded in great detail all the qualities, advantages, and pleasures of a hammam, adding: "But my tongue would become hairy before I could give you an exact idea of the joys of such a place; they must be experienced to be understood. Your city will never be truly perfect until it has a hammam."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Four-hundred-and-ninety-fifth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THE KING'S HEART rejoiced, and he cried: "Be very welcome to my city, O son of excellent parents!" Then he clothed Abu Sir, with his own hands, in a splendid robe of honour, saying: "All that you wish and more shall be given to you; but hasten to build a hammam, for I am impatient to see and enjoy the thing."

He gave Abu Sir a magnificent horse, two negroes, two boys, four girls, and a wonderful house. He honoured the barber even more greatly than he had the dyer and put the best of the palace architects at his disposition, commanding them to build the hammam on whatever site Abu Sir should choose. The barber went throughout all the city with the architects and, when he had chosen a suitable spot, commanded them to build there. Closely following his instructions, they raised a hammam which had not its equal in the whole world; they ornamented it with interlacing lines, many-coloured marbles, and far-brought curiosities such as ravished the soul. When

the building was completed, Abu Sir constructed within it a vast central basin of transparent alabaster and two others of rare marble. Then he went to the king, saying: "The hammam is ready; it lacks only plenishing." The king gave him ten thousand dinars which he hastened to spend on necessary equipment; such as towels of linen and silk, precious essences, perfumes, incense, and the like. As soon as the hammam had been profusely furnished and put in order, Abu Sir demanded ten vigorous helpers; when the king freely gave him twenty well-built and beautiful boys, he initiated them into the art of rubbing and washing, performing these offices upon them himself and having them practice again and again upon his person, until they were perfect in all the business of the hammam. Lastly he fixed a day for the opening of the place and informed the king of it.

When the day came, Abu Sir heated the hammam and the water in the basins, burnt incense and perfume in the braziers, and turned on the water of the fountain, which fell so sweetly that beside the tinkling of it all music would have been a discord. The large jet from the central basin was incomparably strange and would have turned aside the spirits of the blest. At length all within the hammam shone so bright and clean that the place surpassed the candours of lily and jasmin.

As soon as the king, with his wazirs and emirs, crossed the threshold of the great door, his senses were agreeably amazed; his eyes by the decoration, his nose by the perfumes, and his ears by the voices of the fountain. "What is this?" he asked in surprise. "It is a hammam," answered Abu Sir, "but this is only the entrance." He led the king into the first hall and, causing him to mount the dais, un-

dressed him and wrapped him from head to foot in suave towels. He put wooden bathing clogs upon his feet and introduced him to the second hall, where the sultan sweated to a marvel. Then, with the help of the boys, he rubbed his limbs with hair gloves, so that all the inner dirt, accumulated by the pores of the skin, came forth in long threads like worms, much to the astonishment of the king. Then Abu Sir washed him with plenty of water and soap and sent him down into the marble bath, which was filled with rose-scented water. After leaving him immersed for a certain time, he brought him forth and washed his head with rose-water and rare essences. Then he tinted the nails of his hands and feet with henna, which gave them a colour as of dawn. During these processes aloes and aromatic nard burnt about them and soaked them with soft vapour.

The king now felt himself as light as a bird and breathed with all the fans of his heart; his body was so smooth and firm that it gave back a harmonious sound when touched by the hand. His ecstasy knew no bounds when the boys began to rub his limbs with as sweet a rhythm as if he had been a lute. Unnatural strength came to him, so that he felt himself about to roar like a lion. "As Allah lives," he cried, "I have never felt so robust in all my life! So this is a hammam, O master barber?" "It is a hammam, O king of time," answered Abu Sir. Then said the king: "By the life of my head, my city was no city until this place was built." After he had been dried with musk-scented towels, he went up again onto the dais, to drink sherberts confectioned with sliced snow.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Four-hundred-and-ninety-sixth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THEN SAID THE KING to Abu Sir: "What do you consider the worth of such a bath, and what price do you mean to charge?" "Let the king fix the price!" answered the barber. "Then," continued the king, "I fix the price of such a bath at a thousand dinars, no less," and straightway he gave a thousand dinars to Abu Sir, saying: "Henceforth you shall charge each visitor to your hammam the same amount." "Pardon me, O king of time," replied the barber, "not all men are equal, some are rich and some are poor. If I charged each client a thousand dinars, the hammam would soon be shut, for the poor cannot pay so much." "What would you wish to charge, then?" said the king; and Abu Sir answered: "I would wish to leave the price to the generosity of my clients; so that each would pay according to his means and the measurements of his soul. The poor man would give what he was able—and, as for the thousand dinars, that is a kingly present." The emirs and wazirs approved his words, and said: "His idea is just, O king of time. For you, O beloved, think that all men can do as you do." "Perhaps you are right," conceded the king, "In any case, this man is a stranger and poor, so that it is our duty to reward him largely for his gift to our city of this bright incomparable hammam. As you say that you cannot pay a thousand dinars for a single bath, I authorise you to pay a hundred dinars on this occasion and each to add a white slave, a negro, and a girl. In the future, as the barber has so decided, you shall

pay according to your means and generosity." When the wazirs and emirs had taken their baths upon that day, they each paid to Abu Sir a hundred dinars in gold, a white slave, a negro, and a girl; and, as there were forty of them, the barber received four thousand dinars, forty white boys, forty negroes, and forty girls. Also, by the king he was enriched with a thousand dinars, ten white boys, ten young negroes, and ten girls like moons.

When Abu Sir had received all this money and these gifts, he kissed the carth between the king's hands, saying: "O auspicious king, O face of fair destiny, O just and generous one, where am I going to lodge this army of white boys, negroes, and girls?" "It was to make you rich that I have had them given to you," answered the king, "for I thought that perhaps you would wish some day to return to your own country and that you would then be able to leave us with enough property to render you and yours for ever beyond the reach of need." "O king of time," replied Abu Sir, "such an army of slaves befits a king such as yourself (whom may Allah bless!), but I would have no need of them when I sat down with my folk to eat simple bread and cheese. Also, how am I going to feed and clothe all this company, whose sharp young teeth will quickly eat up all my property and then myself." "By my life, that is true!" laughed the king, "They are a powerful army and I hardly think you could sustain them. Will you sell them to me for a hundred dinars each?" When Abu Sir answered that he would most assuredly do so, the king called his treasurer and, after paying the barber for the hundred and fifty slaves, sent each of them back as a present to their former masters. Then said Abu Sir: "May Allah quieten your soul, as you have

quietened mine in saving me from the greedy teeth of these young ghouls." The king laughed again and, after compliments, left the hammam and returned to his palace, followed by the emirs and wazirs. Abu Sir passed that night in his new house, sewing the gold into sacks and carefully hiding each sack when it was filled. He found that the service of his house consisted of twenty negroes, twenty boys, and four girls.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Four-hundred-and-ninety-seventh Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

NEXT MORNING ABU SIR had the city criers cry through the streets: "Creatures of Allah, come and take a bath at the king's hammam! For three days no price will be asked." As was to be expected, an enormous crowd thronged the hammam during these days of free bathing. When the fourth morning came, Abu Sir installed himself in the desk at the entrance of the hammam and took the voluntary contributions of the bathers as they went out. Before evening he had filled a whole chest, by Allah's grace, and began to amass that fortune which was destined for him.

Soon the queen, who heard her husband speak enthusiastically of the baths, determined to try one herself. As soon as Abu Sir was informed of her intention, he kept the morning for men but reserved the afternoon for women, employing a discreet female to take the money at the desk. When the queen had ex-

perienced the delicious effects of this new bathing, she resolved to come again every Friday afternoon, paying a thousand dinars for each visit, which was the same price paid by the king, who came regularly every Friday morning.

Thus Abu Sir walked further and further along the road of riches, honour, and glory, remaining all the time the modest and honest fellow he had been. He was always laughing, always affable, always generous to the poor, from whom he would accept no payment. This generosity saved his life, as will be shown in the course of our tale. For the moment it is enough for you to know that a certain sea captain, though he found himself short of money, was allowed by Abu Sir to take a full and delightful bath for nothing. When he had been refreshed with sherberts and honourably escorted to the door by the obliging proprietor, he cudgelled his brains for some way of showing his gratitude. You will see that an occasion was not long in coming.

At length Abu Kir, the dyer, heard tell of this extraordinary hammam; for the whole city spoke of it with admiration, saying: "It is the paradise of the world." Resolving to try the joys of it himself, he dressed in his richest clothes and rode out on his gaily decked mule, with an army of slaves carrying long sticks before and behind him. As soon as he came to the door of the hammam he smelt the perfume of aloe wood and the scent of nard. He saw a multitude of men going in and out, and the rich and poor waiting their turns together on the benches.

The first person he saw on entering the vestibule was his old companion, Abu Sir, sitting at the desk, plump, assured and smiling. It was with difficulty that he recognised him, for the hollows of his cheeks

were now filled up with benevolent fat and his face shone with pleased prosperity. Though the dyer was disagreeably surprised, he pretended great joy and, with matchless insolence, went up to Abu Sir and said in a voice of tender reproach: "Well, well, this is fine behaviour for a friend and a gallant man! You must have known that I had become the king's dyer, one of the richest and most important men in the city, and yet you never came to see me, you never asked yourself: 'What has become of my old friend, Abu Kir?' I have sent my slaves all over the city to hunt for you; but they visited every khan and shop without getting upon your track." With a sad shaking of the head, Abu Sir replied: "O Abu Kir, have you forgotten the way you treated me when I came to you, the blows and the shame, and the cries of 'robber' and 'traitor'?" "What are you saying?" cried Abu Kir, feigning extreme surprise, "Were you the man whom I beat?" and when Abu Sir said that he was, the dyer swore a thousand oaths that he had not recognised him. "I took you for another," he explained, "a robber who had often stolen my fabrics. You were so thin and yellow that it was impossible to recognise you." He beat his hands together, as if in sincere regret, and exclaimed: "There is no power or might save in Allah! How could I have come to make such a mistake? And yet, was not the fault a little with you; for, when you saw me, you did not say that you were Abu Sir? Also, that day, I was almost beside myself with the cares of business. I beg you, in Allah's name, my brother, to forgive me and to forget that unfortunate act, for it was written in the destiny of both." "Allah pardon you, dear companion," answered Abu Sir, "the fault was Fate's and the redress shall be with Allah." "But forgive

me freely," cried the dyer, and Abu Sir answered: "May Allah quit your conscience as I quit it! What can we do against the debts of eternity? Come into the hammam, take off your clothes, and have a refreshing bath, with my blessing!"

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Four-hundred-and-ninety-eighth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

"WHENCE CAME THIS fortune to you?" asked Abu Kir; and Abu Sir replied: "He who opened the doors of prosperity to you, opened them to me also." When he told his story from the day of his beating, Abu Kir exclaimed: "How glad I am to hear that you enjoy the king's favour! I will attempt to increase that favour by telling the king that you have ever been my friend." Then said the barber: "What good can come from interfering with the decisions of Fate? Allah holds all favour or disgrace within His hands. Rather undress at once and taste the joys of water and cleanliness." He himself led the dyer into the private hall and, with his own hands, rubbed, soaped, and worked upon him without allowing one of his assistants to help. Then he set him on a dais in the cool room and offered him sherberts and refreshments with so much consideration that the ordinary clients were abashed to see the king's dyer receiving that exceptional treatment which was ordinarily reserved for the king himself.

When Abu Kir was ready to go, he offered Abu

Sir money, but the latter refused to accept it, saying: "Are you not ashamed to offer it, since I am your friend and there is no cause of difference between us?" "Be it so," said Abu Kir, "In return for your kindness, let me give you a useful piece of advice. Your hammam is admirable, but lacks in one respect of being altogether marvellous. You have no depilatory paste; when you have finished shaving your clients' heads, you either use the razor or tweezers for the hair on the rest of their bodies. I can give you the prescription of a paste which has no equal. Listen: take yellow arsenic and quick lime, pound them together in a little oil, mix in musk to remove the unpleasant smell, and store in an earthenware pot. I answer for the efficacy of this paste; the king will be delighted when he sees his hairs fall without shock or rubbing, and his skin showing all white and smooth beneath." When the barber had made a note of this recipe, Abu Kir left the hammam and hurried to the king's palace.

He bowed low before the king, saying: "O Sultan of time, I come with a warning." "What warning is that?" asked the king; and Abu Kir cried aloud: "Praise be to Allah who has so far saved you from the wicked hands of that enemy to the throne and to the Faith, Abu Sir of the hammam!" "What has he been doing?" asked the astonished king. "Sultan of time," replied the other, "if, by evil chance, you enter the hammam again you will be lost beyond recall." "How?" asked the king; and Abu Kir, filling his eyes with feigned terror and sweeping his arms in a great gesture of despair, panted out: "By poison! He has prepared for you a paste of yellow arsenic and quick lime, which, even though it be only rubbed upon the hairs of the skin, burns like fire. He will suggest

the paste to you by saying that it will remove the hairs of your bottom comfortably and without shock. He will apply the paste to the anus of our king and thus kill him by poison through the most painful of all channels. And the reason? The man is a spy, sent by the king of the Christians to slay our master. I have run to warn you, for your benefits are thick upon me."

The king was thrown into an extreme of terror by these lies; he shivered and his anus contracted as if it already felt the burning poison. "Carefully keep this thing a secret," he said, "I will go at once to the hammam with my grand-wazir to test the truth of what you tell me."

As soon as the king and the wazir arrived, Abu Sir introduced them into the private room and would have begun to rub and wash the sultan; but the latter bade him begin with the wazir. So Abu Sir made the wazir, who was a plump old man as hairy as a buck, lie down on the marble, and there rubbed, soaped, and washed him with his greatest skill. Then he turned to the king, saying: "Sultan of time, I have found a drug which acts so marvellously upon hairs that a razor is quite unnecessary." "Try it on the lowest hairs of the wazir," said the king.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Four-hundred-and-ninety-ninth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

ABU SIR TOOK a piece of the paste, as big as an almond, from the earthen pot, and spread it on the

hair at the base of the wazir's belly. At once the depilatory effect was so marked that the king was convinced that here was a powerful poison, and turned furiously to the hammam boys, crying: "Arrest this murderer!" He and the wazir dressed in haste and returned to the palace accompanied by their guards, who carried the astonished Abu Sir among them.

The king called the captain of the port and ships, and said to him: "Take this traitor and fasten him in a sack filled with quick lime; then throw him into the sea beneath the windows of my palace, so that he may die two deaths at once, drowning and burning." "I hear and I obey!" answered the captain.

Now this captain of the port and ships was none other than the sailor of whom we have spoken as being beholden to Abu Sir. He at once sought the prisoner in his dungeon and, taking him on board a small boat, conveyed him to a little island near the city where they could speak freely together. "I have not forgotten," said he, "the courteous kindness which you showed me and I would wish to pay it back. Tell me your trouble with the king and what crime you have committed thus to lose his favour and deserve this horrible death." "As Allah lives, my brother," answered Abu Sir, "I am innocent of all fault and have never done anything to merit such a punishment." Then said the Captain: "It must be that you have enemies who have blackened your reputation with the king. Every man gains jealous enemies if Destiny too obviously favours him. But fear nothing, you will be safe in this isle, where you may quietly pass your time in fishing until I can contrive to send you back to your own country. Now I go to pretend your death in sight of the king." When Abu Sir had kissed his hand, the good sailor took a large sack filled with

quick lime and sailed till he came in front of the seaward looking windows of the palace, where the king was waiting to see his orders carried out. The captain raised his eyes to ask for the signal and the king, stretching his arm through a window, signed with his finger that the sack should be thrown into the water. Now the king moved his hand so violently that a gold ring, which was more precious to him than his own soul, slipped from his finger and fell into the sea. This ring was a magic one, upon which depended all his power of authority. With it he held in check the people and the army, for he had but to lift his hand and a sudden ray of light streaming from the ring, would go out against any man and stretch him lifeless on the ground, by striking off the head from between his shoulders. Therefore, when the king saw the ring fall into the sea, he would not speak of it and kept his loss a profound secret lest his power over the people should be gone.

Left alone in the isle, Abu Sir took the fishing net which the captain had given him and, in order both to find food and to distract his torturing thoughts, cast it into the sea. When he withdrew it, it was so full of fish, great and small, and of every colour, that he said to himself: "As Allah lives, it is a long time since I have eaten any fish. I will give one of these to the two cook boys of whom the captain spoke, and command them to fry it for me in oil." You must know that the captain of the port and ships had also the office of supplying the king's kitchen every day with fish. On this particular day, being unable to cast the net himself, he had given the charge to Abu Sir, and had told him of the cook boys whose duty it was to come for the catch. After this lucky first cast, Abu chose out the largest and best from among the

fish and, drawing his great knife from his belt, thrust it through the still living gills, and lo! when he withdrew the blade, upon its point was a gold ring. Abu Sir had no idea of the ring's extraordinary powers (as you will have guessed, it was none other than the ring which the king had let fall into the sea) and he therefore slipped it carelessly upon his finger, without thinking over much about it.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundredth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

WHEN THE TWO cook boys arrived at the isle, they said to Abu Sir: "O fisherman, can you tell us what has become of the captain of the port, who daily gives us the king's fish? We have been looking for him everywhere. In which direction did he go?" "He went in that direction," answered Abu Sir, pointing with his right hand straight towards the youths, and behold! their two heads leapt from their shoulders and their bodies rolled upon the earth.

The beam from the king's ring had killed the two cook boys.

"Who has done this thing?" cried Abu Sir when he saw the lads lying dead before him. He looked all about him in the air and on the ground; and then fell into a fit of trembling. He stood there, certain that he was surrounded by invisible and murderous Jinn, until he saw the sea captain coming towards him. The sailor's quick eyes saw the two corpses and

the ring shining in the sun, when he was yet far off. In a flash he understood what had happened and cried: "O my brother, do not move your right hand or I am a dead man!"

Although Abu Sir wished to run forward and greet his friend, these words perplexed him and he stood rigid until the captain came up and threw his arms about his neck. "Each has his destiny about him," cried the sailor, "and your fate is stronger than the king's. Tell me how you obtained this ring and in return I will explain its powers." Abu Sir told him the tale of the fish and then the captain explained the deadly quality of the ring, adding: "Now your life is safe, but the king's is not. You can come back fearlessly to the city and dash the heads from your enemies and from the king himself." At once he led Abu Sir on board the little boat and, when they arrived at the city, hastened with him to the palace. The king was holding his diwan, surrounded by a crowd of wazirs, emirs and counsellors; and although he was filled to the nose with rage and care at the loss of his ring, he dared not speak of it or have it searched for in the sea lest his enemies should rejoice. When he saw Abu Sir he did not doubt that there was some plot to take his life; therefore he cried: "Wretch, how have you come out of the sea where you were burned and drowned?" "Allah is greater than us all, O king of time," replied the barber; and he told the king how he had been saved by the captain in return for a free visit to the hammam, how he had found the ring, and how he had unwittingly killed the two cook boys. "Now, O king," he continued, "I am here to give you back your ring, because your benefits are thick upon me and to prove that I am not a criminal. For a criminal would use the ring to kill

his enemies and even the king himself. In return, I beg you to look more closely into the crime of which I was accused and to torture me to death if I am found in any way guilty." The king took the ring which Abu Sir handed him and, replacing it on his finger, breathed a deep breath of relief and felt his soul return to his body. He rose and threw his arms about the barber's neck, saying: "Surely, O man, you are the choice flower of excellent breeding: I pray you, do not blame me too much, but forgive me the harm I did you. As Allah lives, no other would have returned me my ring." "O king of time," answered Abu Sir, "if you would free your conscience I beg you to tell me what was charged against me." "That is unnecessary," said the king, "for I am now certain that you were falsely accused; but, as you wish to know, Abu Kir, the dyer, accused you of plotting with the king of the Christians to murder me with that depilatory paste which you tried upon the lower hairs of my wazir."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundred-and-first Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

"O KING OF TIME," cried Abu Sir with tears in his eyes, "I do not know the king of the Christians nor have I ever set foot upon his land. But the truth is this." He told the king how he and the dyer had sworn to help each other and had sailed from Alexandria together; he told of the tricks and knaveries

which Abu Kir had invented against him, of the beating, and of the prescription for the paste. "You must know," he went on, "that the paste is an excellent thing when put to its proper use and only dangerous when swallowed. In my country the men and women use nothing else and the hairs fall from their bodies without their knowing it. If the king needs proof of the rest of my story he has but to summon the doorkeeper of the khan and the assistants from the dye works." Simply to please Abu Sir, for he was already convinced, the king sent for the doorkeeper of the khan and the apprentices; and these, when they were questioned, confirmed and even added to the accusations which the barber had made against the dyer.

Then cried the king of the guards: "Bring me the dyer, bare-headed and bare-footed, with his hands tied behind his back!" The guards hastened first to Abu Kir's shop and then to his house, where they found him savouring quiet joys and dreaming, without doubt, of his old companion's death. They fell upon him with buffets on the neck, kicks up the bottom, and buttings in the belly; while they trod him under foot they stripped off all his clothes except his shirt and dragged him, with his hands tied behind his back, into the presence of the king. When he saw Abu Sir seated on the right of the throne, the doorkeeper and the apprentices standing before it, he understood that he was lost and, because of his terror, did that which he did in the very middle of the audience chamber. The king looked at him angrily, saying: "You cannot deny that you stand in the presence of your old friend, the poor man whom you robbed, stripped, ill-treated, spurned, beat, harried, cursed, accused, and, but for the grace of Allah, killed." The doorkeeper

and the apprentices raised their hands and cried: "As Allah lives, you cannot deny it! We are witnesses before Him and before the king." Then said the sultan: "Whether you confess or deny, you shall receive the full punishment which Fate has decreed for you . . . O guards, take him, drag him by the feet through all the city, fasten him in a sack filled with quick lime, and throw him into the sea, that he may die a double death." But the barber cried: "O king of time, I beg you to accept my intercession for this man, for I forgive him." "You may forgive his trespasses against you," answered the king, "but I do not forgive his trespasses against me . . . Guards, take him away!"

The guards dragged Abu Kir by his feet through all the city, crying his crimes, and then, after fastening him into a sack filled with quick lime, cast him into the sea. Thus he died a double death, being both burnt and drowned. It was his destiny.

"O Abu Sir," said the king to the barber, "you have but to ask for all you wish and it shall be given you." "I only ask the king to send me back to my country," answered Abu Sir, "I can live no longer away from my own folk." Although the king had wished to make him grand-wazir in the place of the plump and hairy one, he prepared instead a great ship and filled it with male and female slaves and rich treasures. As he took leave of the barber, he said once more: "You would not rather become my wazir?"; but, when the barber again refused, the king detained him no longer and allowed the ship to sail towards Alexandria.

Allah had written a fair voyage for them, so that they arrived safely at Alexandria. When they disembarked, one of the slaves saw a sack which had been cast by the sea upon the beach. Abu Sir opened this

and discovered the body of Abu Kir which the currents of God had returned to its own place. The barber had his one-time friend buried upon the shore and raised a monument above him, which became a place of pilgrimage, supported by the dead man's goods. On the door Abu Sir engraved these lines:

*Hold from your lips the bitter gourd of evil,
Because that wine leads even to this level.
Upon the water floats the flesh of death,
But quiet pearls eternal lie beneath.
See, the transparent pages of the air
In serene spaces! It is written there:
He who sows good shall gather good from earth,
For every harvest savours of its birth.*

Such was the end of Abu Kir, the dyer, and such the beginning of Abu Sir, the barber, in a life of happiness and ease. The bay where the dyer was buried is known as the Bay of Abukir unto this day. Glory be to Him who lives in His eternity and brings forth Winter and Summer according to His will!

Then said Shahrazade: "That, O auspicious king, is all that I know of the tale." "By Allah, it is an edifying story!" cried Shahryar, "It has roused in me the desire to hear one or two moral anecdotes." "Those are the kind of tale which I know best," answered Shahrazade.

At this point, she saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundred-and-second Night
Had Come*

SHAHRAZADE SAID:

MORAL ANECDOTES FROM
THE PERFUMED GARDEN

“MORAL ANECDOTES, O auspicious King, are the tales which I know best. I will tell you one or two or three from the Perfumed Garden.” Then said King Shahryar: “Begin quickly, for a great weariness weighs upon my soul tonight and I doubt whether your head is safe upon your shoulders.” “Listen, then,” answered Shahrazade with a smile, “but first I must warn you, O auspicious king, that, though these anecdotes are very moral, they might seem licentious to gross and narrow minds.” “Do not let that stop you, Shahrazade,” said King Shahryar, “only, if you think these moral anecdotes ought not to be heard by this little one, who listens, I do not very well know why, among the carpets at your feet, tell her to depart at once.” But little Doniazade, fearing to be driven away, threw herself into the arms of her elder sister. Shahrazade kissed her upon the eyes and calmed her against her breast; then she turned to King Shahryar, saying: “I think that she should be allowed to stay, for ‘to the pure and clean all things are pure and clean,’ and there is nothing shameful in speaking of those things which lie below our waists.”

THEN SHE SAID:

THE THREE WISHES

IT IS RELATED, O auspicious King, that there was once a well-intentioned man who had passed all his life

in eager expectation of that miraculous night, which the Book promises to Believers of burning faith, the Night of Possibility, when a pious man may realise his every wish. On one of the last nights of Ramadan the saint, who had fasted strictly all day, felt himself suddenly visited by divine grace. He called his wife and said to her: "This evening I feel pure before the Eternal and am persuaded that it is my Night of Possibility. As my wishes will be granted by the Rewarder, I wish to consult with you as to what I should ask, for I have sometimes benefited from your advice." "How many wishes will you have?" asked the wife; and when he told her that he might have three, she continued: "You know that the perfection of man and his delight are rooted in his manhood; no man may be perfect who is chaste or impotent or a eunuch. It follows that the larger a man's zebb, the greater his manhood and the further he has gone upon the road of perfection. Therefore, bow humbly before the face of the Highest and beg for your zebb to grow to magnificence." Straightway the man bowed himself and, turning his palms towards the sky, prayed: "O Benefactor, O Generous, enlarge my zebb even to magnificence!"

This wish was no sooner expressed than granted. At once the saint saw his zebb swell and magnify until it looked like a calabash lying between two mighty pumpkins. And the weight of all that was so considerable that he had to sit down again when he would rise, and, when he would lie, get up.

His wife was so terrified by what she saw that she fled away each time that the holy man brought his new treasure to the business. She wept and cried out: "How can I dare this mighty instrument, whose very jetting would pierce a rock through and through?"

At last the poor man said: "O execrable woman, what am I to do with this thing? The fault is yours." "The name of Allah upon me and around me!" she exclaimed, "Pray for the Prophet, old empty eye! As Allah lives, I have no need of all that; I did not ask for so much. Pray for it to be lessened. That will be your second wish."

The saint lifted his eyes to heaven, saying: "O Allah, I beg you to rid me from these too bountiful goods and deliver me from the trouble of them!" Even as he framed the words, his belly became quite smooth, with no more sign of zebb and eggs than if it had been the belly of a little impubic girl.

Needless to say, this complete disappearance did not satisfy the good man and was even more distasteful to his wife, who began to curse him and accuse him of cheating her. Then the holy man's displeasure knew no bounds, and he cried: "See what comes of your foolish counsels, O witless woman! I had three wishes and might have chosen great riches in this world or the next. Now two of them have gone for nothing and I am even in poorer case than I was before. As I have still a third wish I will ask the Lord to restore that which I had in the beginning."

His wish was granted and he obtained just such a zebb as he had had before.

The moral of this tale is that a man should be contented with what he has.

THEN SAID SHAHRAZADE:

THE BOY AND THE RUBBER

IT IS RELATED, O auspicious King, that there was a **hammam** rubber who was so famous for his skill that

he always attended upon the sons of the chief nobles and richest merchants in the city. One day, while he was waiting in the hall for bathers, there entered the son of the grand-wazir, who was a boy still lacking hair about his body but with rich plump curves and a most beautiful face. The rubber rejoiced to touch the sweet body of this delicate lad and exclaimed within his soul: "See how the fat has made silky cushions here! How rich a form, how plump!" He helped his client to lie down upon the warm marble of the hot room and began to knead his body with a special care. When he came to the thighs he was stupefied to see that this large youth had a zebb scarcely as big as a hazel nut. He lamented in his spirit and, stopping short, began to beat one hand against the other for despair.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundred-and-third Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

WHEN THE BOY saw the rubber so dispirited, he asked him the cause of his grief, and the man replied: "Alas, my lord, it is for you I weep! I see you afflicted with the greatest ill possible to man: you are young, plump, and handsome, and have been blessed by the Creator with all qualities and riches; but you lack the instrument of delight without which a man is not a man and may neither give nor receive. What is life without a zebb and all that a zebb implies?"

The wazir's son lowered his head sadly, as he answered: "You are right, my uncle. You remind me of the one grief which occupies me when I am alone. If the heritage of my reverend father is so little, the fault is mine; for hitherto I have not tried to make it fructify. How can a kid become a powerful he-goat if he keeps away from the kindling females, or a tree grow when it is not watered? Until today I have held aloof from women and no desire has come to wake the sleeping baby in its cradle. Now I think it is time that it came out of its sleep and that the shepherd learnt to lean upon his crook."

Then said the rubber: "How can a shepherd lean on a crook no larger than one joint of his little finger?" "I rely on your generous help, my uncle," replied the boy. "Go to the dais where I left my clothes and take from my belt a purse full of gold. If you will procure with that money some girl who can begin my zebb's development, I will make my first experiment today." "I hear and I obey!" answered the rubber and at once, fetching the purse from the dais, left the hammam.

As he went along, he said to himself: "This poor boy thinks that a zebb is made of soft toffee and can be pulled out immediately to any length with the fingers. Does he imagine that a cucumber grows in a day or that a banana ripens before it is a banana!" Laughing to himself, he sought out his wife and said to her: "O mother of my son, I have just been rubbing a very handsome boy at the hammam. He is the grand-wazir's child; but, although the poor lad has every other perfection, he has a zebb the size of a hazel nut. When I lamented for his youth, he gave me this purse of gold and asked me to procure a girl who could instantly develop his miserable inheritance. Just as

if a zebb could grow to manhood at a single touch! I think it would be as well if this gold stayed in our house; so I suggest that you come back with me and pretend to lend yourself to the experiment. We need fear no results with the poor boy; and there is nothing shameful in the matter. You can pass an hour laughing at him, without fear or danger; while I watch over the two of you and guard you from the curiosity of the other bathers."

The young wife readily consented to this plan and at once dressed herself in her fairest robes. Even without ornament she could have turned heads and ravished hearts, for she was one of the most beautiful women of her time.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundred-and-fourth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THE RUBBER BROUGHT his wife into the presence of the wazir's son who was waiting, stretched upon the warm marble; he left them alone and placed himself outside to prevent the men who passed from looking round the door.

As soon as the young woman saw the boy she was charmed with his moon-like beauty; and he felt all his desires go out to her. "What shame," she said to herself, "that he has not got what other men have. My husband told the truth: it is scarcely as big as a nut." Soon, however, the child lying between the boy's thighs stirred in its sleep and, as its smallness

was in appearance only, since it was of that kind which retires almost wholly into its father's bosom when at rest, began gradually to throw off its torpor. Suddenly it sprang erect, as great as an ass's or an elephant's, a powerful sight to see. The rubber's wife uttered a cry of admiration and wound her arms about the boy's neck; he mounted her like a triumphant cock and in an hour pierced her once, twice, thrice, and seven times more again, while she struggled and moaned below him in tumultuous happiness.

During this hour the rubber was watching through the wooden trellis of the door and dared not interrupt for fear of a public shame. He kept on calling out in a low voice to his wife, but she did not answer. "O mother of my son," he whispered fiercely, "why do you not go? The day is far spent and the baby waits your breast at home." But she, still writhing below her lover, answered with breathless laughter: "No, as Allah lives, for I have found a child better worth feeding." Then said the wazir's son: "You may go and give your baby the breast, if you will promise to come back at once." But she exclaimed: "I would rather die than deprive this sweet new suckling of its mother even for an hour."

When the poor rubber heard his wife thus shamelessly refuse to return to him, he was thrown into such despair and rage of jealousy, that he threw himself from the hammam terrace and died in the street below.

The moral of this story is that a wise man does not judge by appearances.

But, continued Shahrazade, I know another which teaches the same lesson even more strongly and proves how dangerous it is to be guided by the seeming of things:

THERE IS WHITE AND WHITE

IT IS RELATED, O auspicious King, that a certain man fell violently in love with a talented and beautiful girl, and, as she was married to a husband whom she loved and was in all things chaste and virtuous, could find no means by which to seduce her. He patiently made siege for a long time without result and then determined upon a trick which should either conquer or punish her.

It happened that the woman's husband had, as confidential servant, a boy whom he had raised from the cradle and who was entrusted with the guardianship of the house while his master was away. The lover took care to bind this boy to him with ties of friendship, making him such fine presents that soon the lad was entirely devoted and would obey him in all things.

When this point had been reached, the lover said to his friend: "I should very much like to look over your master's house today when he and your mistress are absent." "Certainly," answered the other; and, when the husband had gone to his shop and the wife on a visit to the hammam, he led the lover into the house and showed him all the rooms with their various contents. Then the man, who had already prepared for the trick which he meant to play on the young woman, took advantage of the boy turning his back for a moment to approach the bed in the bedchamber and pour upon the sheet some white of egg from a flask. After that he left the room and went his way.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundred-and-fifth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

AT SUNDOWN THE husband shut his shop and, as soon as he reached home, being weary from a long day of buying and selling, went to the bed and would have lain down to rest had he not seen a large stain on the sheet. Being thrown into a great state of distrust, he recoiled, saying to himself: "Who can have entered my house and done this thing with my wife? This is a man's semen without any doubt." To make assurance more sure he placed his finger in the liquid, and, after examination, exclaimed: "It is!" In his fury his first thought was to kill the boy; but he soon abandoned this plan, saying to himself: "So great a stain could not have come out of so young a boy; he has not yet reached an age when the eggs swell." He called the lad to him, crying: "Vile abortion, where is your mistress?" "She has gone to the hammam," answered the lad. On this, suspicion became certainty in the mind of the man, for the law of religion compels both man and woman to make a complete ablution after they have coupled. "Run and tell her to return at once!" he cried, and the boy hurried off to the bath.

As soon as his wife returned and entered the bed-chamber where her husband waited with rolling eyes, the merchant threw himself upon her without a word, and, seizing her by the hair, flung her to the ground. After administering a rain of kicks and blows, he tied her arms and, drawing a great knife, was about to cut her throat, when she yelled and cried so loudly that all the neighbours of both sexes ran in to help her.

Seeing her about to be slain, they pulled the husband away by force and asked why she had merited such punishment. The woman swore that she knew no reason; so the crowd cried to the husband: "If you have cause of complaint, you may either divorce her or reprimand her gently; but kill her you may not; for she is chaste, and known by us all to be so. We will swear to her chastity before Allah and before the kadi. She has been our neighbour for a long time and we have never found offence in her." "Let me cut the woman's throat!" answered the merchant, "If you wish proof of her debauchery, look at this stain which lovers have left in her bed." The neighbours, men and women alike, approached the bed and, when each had plunged a finger in the mess, all cried: "It is a man's semen!" But the boy, who had gone forward with the rest, collected some of the liquid which had not been absorbed by the sheet, and put it in a pan which he then held over a fire. When the contents were cooked, he ate a little and distributed the rest to the neighbours, saying: "Taste this. It is only white of an egg." As soon as they had tasted they realised that what he had said was true, and even the husband admitted that his wife was innocent and had been unjustly ill-treated. He hastened to make his peace with her and, to seal the truce gave her a hundred dinars and a gold collar.

This short tale proves that there is white and white, and that, in every matter of life, a wise man should differentiate.

When Shahrazade had told these anecdotes to the king, she fell silent. Then said Shahryar: "In truth, Shahrazade, these tales are infinitely moral. They have so quieted my spirit that I am ready to hear you

tell me some altogether extraordinary story." "Certainly!" answered Shahrazade. "My next tale will be as strange as you could wish."

THE TALE OF LAND ABDALLA & SEA ABDALLA

AND SHAHRAZADE SAID TO KING SHAHRYAR:

IT IS RELATED—but Allah sees further!—that there was once a fisherman, called Abdalla, who had a wife and nine children to support and was very poor, since he had no resource but his net. This net was his shop, his trade, and the door of safety for his house. He would fish every day in the sea and, if he caught anything, would sell it and spend the price on his children, according to the measure which Allah had meted; but if he caught much, he bought good food for his wife to cook and purchased fruits and the like until all the money was gone; for he would say: "Tomorrow's bread will come tomorrow." He lived thus from day to day without anticipating Destiny.

A morning came when his wife bore a tenth son (for the other nine children were all sons, thanks to Allah!) and there was nothing to eat in the house. Then said the woman: "Dear master, the house has now another dweller and the day's bread is not yet provided. Will you not go out and seek something to sustain us in this painful moment?" "I am just going out," he answered, "I trust in the bounty of Allah and shall make the first cast of my net in the child's name and see the measure of his future fortune." "Trust in Him!" said the wife; and Abdalla left the house with his net upon his shoulders and walked to the sea shore.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundred-and-sixth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

IN THE INFANT'S name he cast and disposed his net in the water, saying: "O my God, grant that his life be easy and not difficult, abundant and not spare!" Then, after waiting a moment, he drew in his net and found it full of dung, sand, gravel and weed; but with no sign of the smallest fish. Saddened and astonished, he cried: "Has Allah created this child without allowing him any provision? That cannot be, that can never be. He who formed the jaws of man and made his two lips for his mouth did not create in vain; He has taken upon Himself to furnish the needs of these things, for He is the Foreseeing One, the Generous. Let His name be exalted!" He took his net on his back and, moving along the shore, cast it in another place. He waited longer this time and had much greater difficulty in drawing the net to land, for it was very heavy. In it he found an ass, all swollen and stinking with death. The fisherman felt deadly sick and, after quickly freeing his net from the corpse, hurried to another part of the beach. "There is no power or might save in Allah!" he said to himself, "This bad luck comes from my wicked wife. How often have I said to her: 'There is nothing more for me in the water and I must earn our food elsewhere. Of a truth, I can do nothing more in this trade; therefore let me practise some other.' I have said this till my tongue was hairy with speaking, but she always

answered: 'Allah Karim, Allah Karim! His generosity knows no limit, therefore do not despair, O father of my children.' Where is all this generosity of Allah? Is this dead ass the destiny of my last-born child or shall it be bought with gravel or sand?"

For a long time Abdalla stood still in bitter disappointment, but at last he decided to try one more cast and asked pardon from Allah for his ill-considered words. "O Rewarder of all creatures, O Writer of all destinies, favour my fishing, favour my child, and I promise that one day he shall be a holy man, devoted to the service of Allah!" Thus prayed the fisherman. "Grant that I may catch a single fish to carry to my benefactor, the baker! When I would stop before his shop to sniff the scent of the hot bread in the black days of my poverty, he would generously give me enough to satisfy my nine and their mother." After he had cast his net a third time Abdalla gave it many minutes to fill before he began to draw it to land. This he could not do until his hands were all bleeding from the effort; for this time the net was even more heavy. At last he succeeded in drawing it ashore and then, to his stupefaction, he saw a human being, a son of Adam, caught in the meshes of the net. The apparition had a head, face, beard, trunk, and arms like ordinary men but ended in a fish's tail.

Abdalla did not doubt for a moment that he was in the presence of some Ifrit, who, in old time, had been shut in a copper jar for rebellion against our master Sulayman, son of David, and cast into the sea. "It is surely one of those!" he said to himself, "Because the metal has been rotted by the years and the seas, he has been able to escape from the sealed jar and creep into my net." Tucking his garment above his knees, the fisherman began to run breathlessly along

the beach, with terrified cries of: "Mercy, mercy, O Ifrit of Sulayman!"

"Approach, O fisherman, and do not fly from me!" cried the man in the net, "I am human as you are, no Marid or Ifrit, but a human like yourself. Fear nothing, for if you will help me out of this net, I will reward you largely and Allah will remember it in your favour on the day of judgment." Abdalla's heart calmed a little at these words; he ceased his flight and began to return very slowly towards the net, advancing one leg and drawing back the other, as the saying is. When he was close, he said to his strange captive: "You are sure you are no Jinni?"

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundred-and-seventh Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

"I AM NOT" answered the man in the net, "I am a human who believes in Allah and his Prophet." "Then who threw you into the sea?" asked Abdalla, and the other replied: "No one threw me into the sea; I was born there. I am one of the children of the sea, a numerous people who live in the marine depths. We live and have our being in the water, as you upon the earth, and the birds in the air. We all believe in Allah and His Prophet (upon whom be prayer and peace!) and are well-disposed towards the earth men, since we obey the commandments of Allah and the precepts of the Book. If I were a Jinni or evil Ifrit, would I not have torn your net in pieces instead of

having the consideration to ask you to help me, in order that your net, which is your wage earner and the door of safety to your house, should not be spoiled?" This last argument dissipated any doubts which Abdalla retained; as he stooped to help the sea-man from the net, the latter continued: "O fisherman, Destiny ruled my capture. I was walking in the water when your net descended about me and caught me in its meshes. I wish to be of service to you and yours. Will you make a pact with me by which each shall swear to be a friend to the other, to give presents and receive them in exchange? For instance, you would come to this place every day and bring me a provision of the fruits of the earth; grapes, figs, water melons, sweet-melons, peaches, plums, pomegranates, bananas, dates, and the like. I will receive them from you gladly and, in return, give you on each occasion the fruits of our sea: coral, pearls, chrysolites, aquamarines, emeralds, sapphires, rubies, the precious metals, and all the jewels of the waters. I will fill the same basket you use to bring my fruit. Do you accept?"

Already the fisherman had been ravished with joy at this splendid enumeration; now he stood on one leg, crying: "As Allah lives, who would not accept? But first let the Fatiha be between us to seal our pact." The man from the sea agreed and the two recited the first chapter of the Koran aloud. Then only Abdalla freed his captive from the net. "What is your name?" he asked. "I am called Abdalla," answered his new friend, "If by chance you do not see me when you come in the morning, you have only to call me by that name and I will appear from the water. And what is your name, my brother?" "I also am called Abdalla," replied the fisherman." Then cried the mer-man: "You are Land Abdalla, and I am Sea Abdalla,

so we are twice brothers, by name and friendship. Wait for me a moment, my brother, while I dive and bring you up your first gift from the sea." With that he leapt from the beach and disappeared below the water.

When a little time passed and he did not appear, Land Abdalla repented of having freed him. "How do I know that he will return?" he thought. "He mocked me, and made these promises to get free. Why did I not keep him prisoner? I could have shown him to the people and made much money. I could have carried him into the houses of the rich, who do not care to go out for their entertainment, and been largely rewarded for my show. Your fish has escaped, O fisherman!"

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundred-and-eighth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

EVEN AS THE FISHERMAN was lamenting, the merman appeared through the surface of the waves, holding something above his head, and climbed on to the beach beside him. His two hands were filled with pearls, coral, emeralds, hyacinths, rubies, and other stones, which he handed to his friend, saying: "Take these, Abdalla, my brother, and excuse their fewness; for today I have no basket to fill; when you bring me one I will load it to the top with these sea fruits." The fisher rejoiced at the sight of the shining jewels and, after letting them trickle between his marvelling fin-

gers, hid them in his breast. "Do not forget our pact," said the merman, "Return here every morning before sunrise." Then he took leave of the fisherman and dived into the sea.

Land Abdalla returned to the city, drunken with joy, and made his way to the shop of the benevolent baker, who had been good to him in the black days. "My brother," he said, "fortune begins to walk upon our way. I pray you give me an account of what I owe you." "Is there need of an account between such friends?" asked the baker, "If you have a little money to spare, give me what you can; if you have nothing, take as much bread as you need for your family and wait to pay me until prosperity has become your permanent guest." "Good friend," answered the fisherman, "prosperity has taken up eternal abode with me for the good luck of my latest born and by the munificence of Allah. Yet all that I can give you is little compared with your kindness when want had me by the throat. Take this as earnest of more to come." So saying, he pulled so great a handful of jewels from his breast that not half remained. This he stretched out to the baker, saying: "I beg you to lend me a little money until I have sold my sea gems in the market." Stupefied by what he saw and received, the baker emptied his till into Abdalla's hands and insisted on carrying the necessary bread to the fisherman's family himself. "I am your slave and servant," he exclaimed; and, taking a basket of loaves on his head, walked behind Abdalla to his house. There he set down the basket and, after kissing his friend's hand, went on his way. Abdalla gave the loaves to his wife and then went out again and bought lamb, chicken, vegetables and fruit. That evening the woman did mighty cookery and all the family ate

abundantly to the health of the new-born, who had brought such fortune to the house.

Abdalla told his wife all that had happened and handed over to her the rest of the jewels, so that she rejoiced, saying: "Keep this most fortunate adventure secret; otherwise you will risk grave embarrassment by the folk of the government." "I will hide the thing from all except the baker," answered Abdalla, "Although good fortune should be kept secret, I cannot make a mystery of it with the first man who ever befriended me."

Very early next morning Land Abdalla returned to the sea bearing a basket full of every kind and colour of fruits. Setting his load down on the sand, he clapped his hands, calling: "Where are you, Sea Abdalla?" At once a voice answered from below the waves: "I am here, Land Abdalla," and the merman came up out of the water and climbed ashore. After mutual greetings, the fisherman gave his basket of fruit to the merman who thanked him heartily and dived back into the sea. A few moments later he reappeared, carrying the basket emptied of its fruit, but heavy with emeralds, aquamarines, and all the splendid harvest of the sea. When the two had said farewell, the fisherman loaded the basket on his head and made straight for his friend's bakery.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundred-and-ninth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

"PEACE BE UPON YOU, O Father of open hands!" he said, and the baker answered: "And upon you

be peace and benediction from Allah, O face of good omen! I have just sent up to your house a dish of forty cakes which I cooked especially for you. In their preparation I did not spare clarified butter, cinnamon, cardamom, nutmeg, turmeric, artemesia, anis, or fennel." The fisherman plunged his hand into the basket, which shone with a thousand coloured fires, and gave the baker three large handfuls of jewels. When he reached his own house, he chose from the basket the finest specimen of each kind and colour and, wrapping the gems in a piece of cotton, took his way to the market of the jewellers. Entering the shop of the syndic, he showed his marvellous wares, saying: "Do you wish to buy these?" The syndic looked at him suspiciously and asked if he had any more. When Abdalla answered that he had a whole basket of them at home, the other asked: "Where is your house?" "As Allah lives, I have no house," answered the fisherman, "but only a hut of rotten planks at the end of a lane near the fish market." On hearing this answer the jeweller cried to his lads: "Arrest this man! He is the robber who was reported to us as having stolen the queen's jewels!" The assistants beat Abdalla soundly and all the jewellers flocked together to curse him. Some said: "He is the man who committed the robbery in Hassan's shop last month," and others exclaimed: "That is the wretch who cleaned out so-and-so's shop." Each told a tale of theft by some unknown robber and attributed it to the fisherman; but Abdalla kept silence and made no sign of denial. He allowed himself, after the beating, to be dragged into the presence of the king by the syndic of the jewellers, who wished to make him confess his crimes in the royal presence and then be hanged at the palace gate.

When all the jewellers had entered the diwan, the syndie said: "O king of time, since the queen's collar disappeared we have done our best to catch the thief and now, with the help of Allah, we have succeeded. Here is the guilty man and here are the jewels which were found upon him." Then said the king to the chief eunuch: "Take these stones and show them to your mistress, begging her to say whether they are those of the collar which she lost." So the chief eunuch took the splendid gems to the queen and asked her that question.

The queen marvelled and replied: "They are not the same at all. I have found my collar in the chest. These stones are far more beautiful than mine; they cannot have their equal in the world. Run, O Masrur, and tell the king to buy these stones for another collar, which he can give to our daughter, Prosperity, who has now reached a marriageable age."

When the king learnt the queen's answer, he flew into a rage with the syndie of the jewellers for thus apprehending and maltreating an innocent man, and cursed him with all the curses of Ad. "O king of time," answered the trembling sheikh, "we knew that this man was a poor fisherman and therefore, when we saw him with these stones and learnt that he had a basket full of them at home, we concluded that such wealth was too great to be got honestly." At this answer the king's wrath increased and he cried out to the syndie and the rest of the jewellers: "O vulgar minds, O heretics, O common earthy souls! Do you not know that any fortune, however marvellous and sudden, is possible in the destiny of a true Believer? Wretches, you have the stiff-necked impudence to condemn this poor man without a hearing, without any examination, on the absurd pretext that such wealth

is too great for him! You treated him like a thief and dishonoured him among his fellows. Not for a moment did you think of Allah, who distributes His favour without the niggardliness common to jewellers. Ignorant fools, do you know, then, the size of the infinite wealth of God, that you dare to judge by your mean and muddy figures what weight may be in the scales of a happy destiny? Begone out of my sight, O men of misery! I pray that Allah will ever withhold His blessings from you!" Thus he drove them in shame from before the throne.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundred-and-tenth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THE KING TURNED to Abdalla the fisherman and, before asking him the least question, exclaimed: "O you who have been poor, may Allah bless you in the gift which He has bestowed! I give you security . . . Now do you wish to tell me truly how you came by these jewels, which are so beautiful that no king of the earth has got the like?" "O king of time," answered Abdalla, "I have at home a fish basket filled with stones like these, a gift from my friend, the Sea Abdalla." He told the king the story of his adventure with the merman, in all its details, adding: "I made a pact with him, sealed by a recital of the Fatiha, by which I am bound to bring him every morning at dawn a basket filled with the fruits of the earth and he is bound to fill that basket with the fruits of the sea, which are jewels of great price."

The king marvelled at Allah's generosity to His Believers, and said: "O fisherman, this was written in your destiny! I have only to tell you that riches demand protection and that a wealthy man ought to have a high rank. As I wish to guard you for all my lifetime, and even after—since I cannot answer for the future and do not know what my successor might do to you through greed and envy—I will marry you to my daughter, Prosperity, a girl already ripe for marriage, and appoint you my grand-wazir, thus leaguering you directly with the throne before my death."

The king called his slaves, saying: "Conduct your master, Abdalla, to the hamman," and the slaves led him to the palace bath and, after washing him carefully, put royal robes upon him and reconducted him to the presence of the king, who straightway named him grand-wazir. He gave him instruction in his new duties and Abdalla thanked him, saying: "O king, your advice is my rule of conduct and your kindness a shadow in which I take delight." Then the king sent couriers to the fisherman's house with numerous guards; with men playing upon the fife, the clarinet, the cymbals, the big drum, and the flute; and with women expert in dress and ornament: to clothe and deck Abdalla's wife and the ten sons, to install them in a palanquin carried by ten negroes and to conduct them to the palace amid sounds of music. The woman, with her last-born at her breast, was placed in a rich litter with her nine other children and conducted by the wives of emirs and nobles to the palace, where the queen received her with every mark of honour. The king greeted the children, and, making them sit and turn about upon his knee, caressed them paternally with as much pleasure as if they had been his own sons. In order to show her affection for the wife of

the new wazir, the queen appointed her to govern all the women of the harem and made her grand-wazira of the apartments.

That same day the king fulfilled his promise by giving his only daughter, Prosperity, to be Abdalla's second wife. He celebrated the marriage with a great feast for citizens and soldiers, and illumination of all the streets. At night Abdalla learnt the delights of young flesh and the difference between the virginity of a little princess and the old used body on which he had rested hitherto.

At dawn next morning the king, who had been awakened before his usual hour by the emotions of the day before, went to his window and saw his new wazir, the husband of Prosperity, leaving the palace with a basket of fruit on his head. He called out to him: "What are you doing, my son-in-law? Where are you going?"

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundred-and-eleventh Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

"I AM CARRYING the fruit to my friend, Sea Abdalla," answered the wazir. "But this is not the hour when men leave the palace," objected the king, "and it is hardly fitting that my son-in-law should carry a porter's load on his head." "That is true," replied Abdalla, "but I am afraid that I will miss my appointment and appear to the merman as a liar, one whom prosperity has made forgetful of his promise." Then

said the king: "You are right. Hurry to your friend and Allah go with you!" Abdalla took his way through the markets, where the earliest merchants were opening their shops. "That is Abdalla, the wazir," they said to each other, "That is the king's son-in-law, who goes down to the sea to exchange those fruits for precious stones." Some, who did not recognise him, stopped him as he went, saying: "O fruit-seller, how much for a measure of apricots?" He answered each one very politely: "They are not for sale. They are already sold"; and thus pleased all. When he came to the shore he saw Sea Abdalla rising from the waves. He gave him the fruit and received a new load of brightly coloured gems. Then he returned to the city and sought the shop of his friend, the baker. He found it closed and waited a little in case the good man had not yet arrived. At last he asked a neighbouring shopkeeper what had become of the baker and, when the man answered: "I do not know exactly what Allah has done to him; but I believe that he lies sick at his own house," hurried to the street in which the baker lived and knocked upon his door. After a few minutes a terrified head appeared at one of the higher windows and soon afterwards the baker, reassured by the sight of the fisherman with his jewels, came down and opened the door. He threw himself weeping into Abdalla's arms, and said: "You have not been hanged? I heard that you had been arrested as a thief; and, fearing to be taken as your accomplice, shut up my shop and hid at home. Tell me, my friend, how come you to wear the clothes of a wazir?" Abdalla told him the whole story, adding: "The king has made me his wazir and married me to his daughter. I have now a harem, headed by my old wife, the mother of my children . . . I pray you, take

this basket; for today is the day of your destiny." With that he left his friend and returned to the palace with the empty basket.

When the king saw him coming he laughed aloud, saying: "You see, your friend the merman has played you false." "Far otherwise," answered Abdalla, "the jewels with which he filled the basket today surpassed those of yesterday in beauty. I have given them all to my friend, the baker, who, in the days when misery had me by the throat, fed me and my children and their mother. He was not unmindful of me in the days of my poverty and therefore I have remembered him in the days of prosperity. As Allah lives, I wish to show that my good fortune has not hardened me against the poor." The king was edified in the extreme by this reply, and asked the baker's name. "He is called Abdalla, the baker," replied the wazir, "just as I am called Land Abdalla, and my friend, the merman, is called Sea Abdalla." Then cried the astonished king: "I am called King Abdalla. We are all four named the servants of Allah. And as the servants of Allah are equal in His sight, being brothers in the Faith, I wish you to go and fetch Abdalla, the baker, that I may make him my second wazir."

Land Abdalla fetched Abdalla, the baker, into the presence of the king, who invested him with the proper garments and named him wazir of his left.

Abdalla, who had been a fisherman, and was now wazir on the king's right, fulfilled his new functions to the satisfaction of all, and never forgot to carry the fruits in season to his friend, Sea Abdalla, in exchange for precious stones and metal. When there were no fresh fruits in the gardens or shops, he would fill the basket with dried raisins, almonds, nuts, pistachios, dried figs, dried apricots, and every kind and

colour of dried conserve. Each morning for a whole year he became possessed of a basket full of gems.

One day Land Abdalla, who had come down to the sea at dawn according to his custom, sat by his friend's side upon the sand and began to talk about the usages of mermen.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundred-and-twelfth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

"IS IT BEAUTIFUL in your country?" he asked. "It is beautiful," answered the other, "If you wish, I will take you with me down into the sea and show you all it contains. You can visit my city and receive the cordial hospitality of my house." But Land Abdalla replied: "My brother, you were created in the water and it is your natural element. That is why you can live beneath the sea without inconvenience. But, before I accept your invitation, please tell me if it would be fatal for you to live upon the land." "It would be fatal," agreed Sea Abdalla, "my body would dry away, the winds of the earth would blow upon me and I should die." Then said Land Abdalla: "It is the same with me. I was created upon the earth and it is my natural element; the airs of it do not inconvenience me, but if I came down into the sea with you, the water would penetrate my body and strangle me, and I should die." "Have no fear for that!" cried the merman, "I will bring you an unguent which, when it is smeared upon your body, will render the water

harmless, even if you decide to stay with us for the rest of your life. In this way you can bide with me and explore the sea in every direction, sleeping and waking in the water with no oppression."

"In that case," said the wazir, "there is nothing to prevent my diving with you. Bring me the unguent and I will try it." The merman took up the basket of fruits and jumped into the sea. In a few moments he returned, carrying a jar filled with an ointment like cow's grease, coloured yellow gold and having a delicious scent. "Of what is it made?" asked Land Abdalla, and his friend replied: "It is the liver fat of a fish called *dandan*. *Dandan* is the greatest of all the fishes in the sea. He can swallow at a single mouthful those things which you on earth call elephants and camels." "Then on what does he feed?" cried the old fisherman in a fright. "He eats lesser fish," answered the other, "You know the proverb: The weak are devoured by the strong." "That is true," assented Land Abdalla, "but are there many of these *dandans* where you live?" "Thousands and thousands and Allah knows how many," answered the other. "Then, my brother, I pray you to excuse me from making my visit!" cried the wazir; but the merman reassured him, saying: "Have no fear; for although *dandan* is very ferocious, he fears an Adamite because the flesh of man is violent poison to his kind." "O Allah," exclaimed the wazir, "what good would it do me to be poison for *dandan* once I was swallowed by *dandan*?"; but, "You have absolutely nothing to fear from *dandan*," said the merman finally, "when he sees an Adamite he flees away. Also, he will recognise the smell of his own fat and do you no harm." Somewhat reassured, Land Abdalla cried: "I put my trust in Allah and in you!"; and, after

undressing, dug a hole in the sand and buried his clothes, so that none might steal them while he was gone. Then he smeared himself from head to foot with the unguent, without forgetting the smallest openings. "I am ready, O brother of the sea," he said at last.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundred-and-thirteenth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

SEA ABDALLA TOOK his companion by the arm and dived with him into the depths of the sea. When they reached the bottom, he bade his friend open his eyes and Land Abdalla, who felt that he was neither stifled nor crushed by the great weight of water and could breathe even better than on land, after a little hesitation opened them. From that moment he became the guest of the sea.

He saw the water stretching, an emerald pavilion above his head, even as on land a pavilion of topaz is spread above the sea. At his feet lay the marine meadows which no eye from earth had violated since the dawn of time. A calm rested upon the mountains and valleys of the deep; a delicate light bathed the infinite transparency of the water; enchantment led the eye down quiet vistas; he saw forests of red coral, of white coral, and of rose coral, with branches motionless in the silence; there were diamond caves held up by pillars of ruby, of chrysolite, of beryl, of gold sapphire, and of topaz; extravagant trees nodded to the

whispering water over tracts as great as cities; and shells of a thousand colours and tortured forms shot gay reflections from the silver sand into the crystal above them. In the light about him Land Abdalla saw fishes like flowers, fishes like fruit, fishes like birds, fishes dressed in red and silver scales and with the shape of lizards, fishes like buffaloes, like cows, like dogs, and even, in some sort, like men. He walked between vast banks of royal jewels, burning with a hundred coloured fires which the water brightened, as oil would flames on earth; between banks of gaping oysters holding white pearls, rose pearls, and golden pearls; between hedges of swollen sponge swaying heavily and slowly, stretching like the lines of an army and seeming to delimit and brood over the vast loneliness.

Suddenly Land Abdalla who, walking always with his arm in his friend's, watched these strange beauties defile past him, saw a long terrace of caves, cut in the flanks of a mountain of emerald. At the doors sat or stood girls, silvered like the moon, with amber coloured hair. They were like the girls of earth, save that instead of buttocks, thighs, and legs, they had slim fish tails. They were the Daughters of the sea and the green caves were their home.

"I suppose these girls are unmarried," said Land Abdalla, "since I see no males among them?" "They are young virgins," answered the other, "who wait at the entrance of their caves for a man to come and choose among them. In other parts of the sea we have cities peopled by male and female; but the girls, when they become marriageable, have to leave the cities for these caves and dwell here until they are chosen." Soon after making this explanation, he led his friend past a city. "I see a peopled city," said

Land Abdalla, "but I cannot find any shops for buying and selling. Also I am astonished to see that the inhabitants do not cover those parts which ought to be covered." His friend explained, saying: "We have no need for buying or selling, for life is easy to us and we can catch the fish, which is our food, on our thresholds with our naked hands. As for the other matter, we see no necessity for covering one part of the body more than another and besides, we are differently made down there from the people of earth. Also, if we wished to cover ourselves, we have no stuff." "That is so," assented Land Abdalla, "And how is the state of marriage with you?" "In general there are no marriages with us," answered the merman, "for we have no laws to control desire and inclination; when a girl pleases us, we take her; when she ceases to please, we leave her and perhaps she pleases someone else. But you must know that we are not all Mussulmans; there are many Christians and Jews among us and it is these who do not admit marriage, for they are very fond of women. We of the Faith live apart in our own city and marry according to the precepts of the Book; our weddings are such as please the Highest and His Prophet (on whom be prayer and peace!) . . . Let us hasten, my brother, for I wish to come quickly to my own city. It would take a thousand years to show you the excellencies of our empire, and you cannot weigh the whole by weighing one of the parts." Then said Land Abdalla: "I am very hungry and I cannot eat raw fish, as you seem to do." "How then do you eat fish on earth?" asked the merman, and the other answered: "We fry or grill them in olive oil or in oil of sesame." Sea Abdalla laughed and asked: "And how are we water dwellers to obtain olive oil or oil of sesame; or light a fire?"

"You are right," agreed Land Abdalla, "I beg you to lead me to your city."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundred-and-fourteenth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

So SEA ABDALLA led him quickly through spaces, where new thing followed new thing before his eyes, and brought him to a smaller city whose houses were caves, little or great according to the number of those who lived in them. The merman stopped before one of these, saying: "Enter, my brother, for this is my home." He conducted his friend into the cave and called aloud for his daughter. At once there appeared from behind a shrub of rose coral a girl whose long hair floated in the water; she had fair breasts, an excellent belly, a slim body, and large green eyes under black lashes; but, like all the other people of the sea, she ended with a tail, where one would have expected buttocks and legs. She stopped short on seeing the earth dweller and, after giving him a long glance of curiosity, burst out laughing. "Father," she cried, "who is this Tailless one?" "This is my friend from the earth," he answered, "the man who daily gives me a basket of those fruits which you find so much to your liking. Come to him politely and bid him welcome." The girl advanced and wished her father's guest welcome and peace, in picked delightful language; as Land Abdalla was about to answer, the merman's wife came in also, holding her two last babies to her breast, one

on each arm; and both the children were crunching large fishes as children on earth crunch cucumbers.

The woman stopped dead on the threshold when she saw Land Abdalla; setting down the two infants, she laughed with all her might, crying: "As Allah lives, it is a Tailless one! How can anything go without a tail?" She came nearer to the guest and began to lead her daughter and the two children in an amused examination of him. They inspected him closely from head to foot and marvelled especially at his bottom, for never in their lives had they seen a bottom or anything which looked like a bottom. At first they were a little frightened at this protuberance, but soon grew bold enough to touch the amusing novelty all over with their fingers. They laughed again and again, whispering to each other: "It is a Tailless one!" and dancing for joy. Soon Land Abdalla became offended at such casual manners and said to Sea Abdalla: "My brother, did you bring me here to be laughed at by your wife and children?" "I ask your pardon and beg you to excuse me," answered the merman, "Pay no attention to these two women and two children, for their intellects are weak." Then, turning to the little ones, he shouted: "Be quiet!" When they fell silent through fear of him, Sea Abdalla smiled at his guest, saying: "Do not be too surprised at this behaviour, my brother; for with us a man without a tail is little worth."

Even as he was speaking, ten tall and vigorous mermen entered the house and said to its owner: "O Abdalla, the King of the Sea has heard that you are entertaining a Tailless one from the land. Is that true?" "It is quite true," answered Sea Abdalla, "Behold this is he, my friend and guest, whom I am just going to lead back to the shore from which he

came." "You must not do that," they said, "The king has sent us to fetch him, for he wishes to see how he is made. It has been reported that he has some extraordinary thing behind and some even more extraordinary thing in front; and the king is very anxious to see these things and learn their names."

Sea Abdalla turned to his guest and said: "You must excuse me, my brother; for I cannot help myself. We may not disobey the commands of our king." "I am a little afraid of this king," said Land Abdalla, "perhaps he will be offended because I have things which he has not, and therefore kill me." "I will be there to protect you and see that no harm comes to you," replied the merman; and, somewhat reassured, the fisherman exclaimed: "I put my trust in Allah," and followed his host into the presence of the king.

When the king saw the landsman he laughed so heartily that he took a dive off his throne into the water. "Be welcome, O Tailless one!" he spluttered at length, and all the high dignitaries laughed with consuming laughter, pointing out the stranger's behind to each other and saying: "As Allah lives, it is a Tailless one!" "How is it that you have no tail?" asked the king. "I do not know, O king," replied Abdalla, "All the men of earth are like me." "And what," asked the king again, "do you call that thing which you have instead of a tail behind?" Then said Abdalla: "Some people call it a bottom and some call it a backside; others speak of it in the plural as buttocks, because it has two parts." "Of what use is it?" demanded the king. "To sit down on when one is tired, that is all," said Abdalla, "but it is a dearly loved ornament in women." "And what is the name of that thing in front?" demanded the king again. "Zebb," said Abdalla. "And of what use

is a zebb?" continued the king. "It has many uses," returned Abdalla, "but I cannot explain them, out of regard for the king's majesty. I can say this however: those uses are so necessary that, in our world, nothing is so esteemed in a man as a good weighty zebb, just as a jutting backside is the most excellent thing in women." The king and his court laughed more than ever at this answer, so that Land Abdalla, being at a loss, raised his arms to heaven and cried: "Glory be to Allah who created the backside to be a glory in one world and a laughing stock in another!" Then, in confusion at so much attention being paid to his lower parts, he did not know what to do with them and said to himself: "As Allah lives, I wish either that I were far from here or had something with which to cover myself!"

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundred-and-fifteenth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

AT LAST THE KING said: "O Tailless one, your backside pleases me so much that I am ready to satisfy your least desires. Ask what you will!" "O king, I wish for two things," answered Land Abdalla, "to return to the earth and to carry back with me many jewels of the sea." "You must know, O king," broke in the merman, "that my friend has not eaten since he came among us and has no stomach for the flesh of raw fish." Then said the king: "Give him as many gems as his soul desires and lead him back by the way he came."

All the mermen hastened to collect vast empty shells and to fill them with every colour of precious stone. Then they asked the landsman whither they should carry these things and he replied: "Follow me and my friend Abdalla." With that he took leave of the king and, accompanied by his friend, who bore the fruit basket quite full of jewels, and followed by all the mermen carrying the precious shells, he recrossed the submarine empire and climbed up into the light of earth.

He sat down on the sand, resting and drinking in his native air for a few minutes; then he dug up his clothes and dressed himself, saying farewell to his friend the while and bidding him leave the shells and the basket on the shore until he could send porters to fetch them. As soon as he reached the city, he despatched porters to carry all the treasure to the palace, and himself hastened to the king, his father-in-law.

King Abdalla received him with great demonstrations of joy, saying: "We have been very uneasy about your absence." Land Abdalla then told him the whole of his maritime adventure from beginning to end; but there is no need to repeat it here. Also, he placed between his hands the basket and the shells of gems.

Though the king marvelled at the tale and the treasure of the sea, he was deeply offended at the lack of manners which the mermen had shown in regard to his son-in-law's behind, and bottoms in general. "O Abdalla," he said, "I do not wish you to go down to the sea any more to meet this friend of yours; though no great harm has come to you this time, we cannot say what might happen in the future, for *not every time you drop a cup, will it be worth the taking up.*

Also, you are my son-in-law and my wazir, and it is unsuitable that you should be seen carrying a fish-basket on your head or be an object of derision to more or less tailed and more or less impolite persons. Stay in the palace; for thus you will be at peace and we shall have no more anxiety about you."

Thus it was that Land Abdalla, who did not wish to disobey King Abdalla in anything, stayed in the palace with his friend Abdalla the Baker and went no more to meet Sea Abdalla upon the sands. Of Sea Abdalla we hear no more; but doubtless he was very angry.

All lived in great delight and the practice of every virtue until they were visited by the Destroyer of joy, the Separator of friends. Then they died; but glory be to the Living who dies not, who reigns over the Visible and the Invisible worlds, who is Lord of all and watches kindly over His servants, knowing their necessities before they ask and all their acts before they act them!

Shahrazade fell silent and King Shahryar exclaimed: "O Shahrazade, this tale is indeed extraordinary!" Then said Shahrazade: "It is indeed, O king; but, although it has had the good fortune to please you, it is in no way more admirable than the Tale of the Yellow Youth." "You may tell me that tale," said Shahryar; and Shahrazade said:

THE TALE OF THE YELLOW YOUTH

Among other stories it is related, O auspicious king, that one night the khalifat, Haroun Al-Rachid, left his palace, accompanied by his wazir Giafar, his wazir Al-Fazl, Abu Ishak his favourite, the poet Abu Nowas, Masrur the sword-bearer, and Ahmad-the-Moth, his

chief of police. They went, each disguised as a merchant, down to the banks of the Tigris and, getting on board a boat, allowed the current to bear them whither it would. For Giafar had told the khalifat, who was suffering from sleeplessness and depression of spirit, that there was no better remedy for such weariness than seeing a new thing, hearing a new thing, and visiting a new place.

At length the boat drifted beneath the windows of a house which overlooked the river and they heard from inside a beautiful and mournful voice singing to the lute:

*Wine's red in the cup,
A bird sings silver on the branches,
Life must be paid
So make life pay again.*

*This boy, my fair friend
Wine reddens and the white rose blanches,
Has heavy eyes.
I kissed a red rose once*

*On cheeks gay with Spring,
But, now light downs of youth enfranchise,
Peaches lie ripe
Where I thought a rose tree.*

On hearing these verses the khalifat said: "That is an excellent voice, O Giafar," and Giafar answered: "My Lord, I have never heard so delightful a voice in all my life. But to listen to a voice from behind a wall is only to hear it by half. Would it not be better if we could hear it from behind a curtain only?"

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundred-and-sixteenth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THEN SAID THE KHALIFAT: "Let us ask hospitality from the master of this house; and perhaps, in that way, we may get to hear the voice more clearly." They stopped the boat and, stepping out on to the bank, went up to the door of the house, where their knocking was answered by a eunuch, from whom they craved leave to enter. The servant retired and almost immediately the master of the house came to the door himself, saying: "Welcome, ease, and abundance, O my guests! This house belongs to you." He led them into a cool and lofty hall, the ceiling of which was coloured with designs against a background of gold and dark blue; in the middle of the floor a fountain musically spilled its water into an alabaster basin. Then said the host: "My masters, I do not know which of you is of the highest rank, therefore I greet you all equally. Deign to seat yourselves in such places as you prefer." He turned to the end of the hall, where a hundred girls sat on a hundred golden chairs, and, at a sign from his hand, the hundred rose and went out silently, one by one. At a second sign, slaves with girt robes brought large dishes on which were cooked, in every colour, all eatable things which fly in the air, walk on the earth, or swim beneath the seas. Also there were pastries, conserves, and tarts upon which had been written, with pistachios and almonds, verses in praise of the new guests.

When they had eaten and drunken, and were washing their hands, the master of the house said to them: "Dear guests, if you have honoured me with this

visit in order to pleasure me with some command, I pray you speak; for all your desires shall be granted." "Indeed, O host," answered Giafar, "we entered your house in order to hear more clearly that admirable voice which came to us muffled upon the water." "You are very welcome," said the man; and, turning to his slaves, continued: "Beg your mistress to sing us something." A few moments after the slaves had departed, a voice of unequalled loveliness rose from behind the curtain at the back of the hall, singing, to a gentle accompaniment of lutes and harps, this song:

*Take this cup and drink this wine,
For it is a virgin wine
And the cup is new gold.*

*A woman who waits
Is the fool of time.*

*My nights have been many,
To see the brown waters of the Tigris
Under black-veiled stars
Or to watch the moon in the west
Thrusting her silver sword
Into the purple river.*

The voice fell silent and the strings echoed the echoes in a whisper, only for a short time. The khali-fat turned in a marvel of admiration to Abu Ishak, crying: "As Allah lives, I have never heard the like!" Then to the master of the house he said: "Surely, the woman with the voice is in love and separated from her lover?" "That is not so," answered the man, "She is sad for other reasons. Per-

haps, for instance, she is separated from her father and mother, and sings thus when she remembers them." Then said Al-Rachid: "It would be indeed astonishing if a separation from parents could rouse such grief." For the first time he looked closely at his host, as if to read in his face some more likely explanation, and saw that he was being entertained by a young man of great beauty but whose face was the yellow colour of saffron. "Dear host," he said in his astonishment, "we have one more request to make of you, before leaving and going upon our way." "Your wish is granted before it is asked," murmured the yellow youth, and the khalifat continued: "I desire, and those who are with me also desire, to hear whether the saffron colour of your face has been acquired during your life or whether you were born so?"

Then said the yellow youth: "O guests, the tale of this yellow colour is so strange that, were it written with needles on the corner of an eye yet would it serve as a lesson for the circumspect. I pray you to give me your best attention." "Our best attention is yours," they answered, "We are impatient for you to begin."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundred-and-seventeenth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THEN SAID the yellow youth: You must know, my masters, that I am a native of the lands of Oman,

where my father was one of the greatest of the merchants of the sea and owned thirty ships which brought him in an annual income of thirty thousand dinars. Being an enlightened man, he had me taught the art of writing and all else which is necessary to know; also, when his last hour approached, he made me excellent recommendations for my life, to which I listened with respectful attention. Allah took him into His mercy. May He prolong your lives, O guests of mine!

Some time after my father's death, I sat in my house among my guests (for I was now very rich) and a slave informed me that one of my captains had brought me a basket of early fruit. I had the man in and, accepting his gift of unknown and remarkable fruits, gave him a hundred dinars to mark my pleasure. Then, as I was distributing the fruit to my guests, I asked the captain whence it came. No sooner had he answered that he had brought it from Bassora and Baghdad than my guests began to expatiate on the marvels of those two cities, to vaunt the life that is lived there, the suavity of the climate, and the polished benevolence of the citizens. Each capped the other's eulogy until I had no other thought except to visit the places at once. I sold all my goods and properties at a loss, got rid of my men and women slaves, realised on my ladings and on all my ships with the exception of one. Thus I found myself possessed of a thousand thousand dinars, without reckoning the jewels and ingots of gold which I already had by me. I reduced these riches to their smallest compass and, embarking them upon the ship which I had reserved for my own use, set sail for Baghdad.

Allah had written a fair voyage for me, so that I reached Bassora in good health and with all my riches

intact. There I took passage on a smaller boat and went up the Tigris to Baghdad. In that city I discovered that the Karkh quarter was the most fashionable and therefore hired a handsome house there in the Street of Saffron, and installed myself with all my belongings. After I had made my ablutions I put on my finest clothes, rejoicing all the while to be at last in illustrious Baghdad, envy of cities and goal of my desires, and went forth to wander at random through the most frequented streets.

It was a Friday and the people walked as I did, in festival garments, breathing the fine air. I let the crowd take me at random and thus came to Karn Al-Sirat which is the favourite objective of those who stroll in Baghdad. In this place I saw, among tall and beautiful houses, one taller and more beautiful, giving upon the river. On the marble steps sat an old man dressed in white; he had a venerable appearance and was distinguished by a beard which fell to his waist in two equal silver divisions. This old man was surrounded by five boys, quite as beautiful as moons and scented with chosen essences even as he was.

Being won over by the appearance of the white old man and the beauty of his boys, I asked a passer-by what his name might be. "That is the sheikh Tahir Abu Al-Ola, friend of youth," he said, "Those who enter his house do nothing else but eat, drink, and amuse themselves, according to their fancy, with the boys or girls who dwell there."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundred-and-eighteenth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

CHARMED BY THIS description, I cried aloud: "Glory be to Allah, who has guided me from my ship to this well-looking old man; for I only came to Baghdad to find such an one!" Then I went up the steps and wished the sheikh peace, saying: "My master, I wish to ask you something." He smiled at me, as a father smiles upon his son, and answered: "What is it you wish?" Then said I: "I ardently desire to be your guest for tonight." "Certainly," he replied with a still kinder look, "Tonight, my son, I have a new batch of girls; they have just arrived and are of various prices for the evening. Some are ten dinars, some are twenty, and others are fifty or even a hundred. It is for you to choose." "As Allah lives," I replied, "I think I will make my first experiment with one at ten dinars. After that Allah will see! Here are three hundred dinars for one month, since that time is needed for a good trial." I handed over the three hundred dinars and, when the old man had weighed them in his scales, he called to one of the boys, saying: "Conduct your master!" The boy took my hand and led me to the hammam of the house, where he gave me an excellent bath and lavished minute attentions upon me. Then he conducted me to a pavilion and rapped upon one of its doors.

At once a kind and laughing girl opened and bade me welcome. "I leave our guest in your hands," said the boy and then retired. The girl took the hand which the boy had relinquished and led me into a richly ornamented room, on the threshold of which

two little personal girl slaves, as pretty as stars, met us and went before us. I looked closely at their mistress and saw that she was in every way as beautiful as a full moon.

She made me sit by her side and signed to the two little ones, who brought us a broad gold dish on which were arranged roast chicken, baked meats, roast quails, roast pigeons, and roast wild cock. We ate our fill and never in my life have I tasted such meats, or drunk more savoury wines than those which followed, or smelt more lively flowers, or eaten of sweeter fruit, suaver jams, or more extraordinary pastry. Later, she gave such tender proof of charm and expert lust that I passed the whole month with her as if it had been a single night.

When the month was finished, the boy came for me and led me first to the hammam and then to the white old man. "Master," I said to him, "I would like one of those at twenty dinars." "Give me the gold," he answered; so I fetched the gold from my house and weighed him over six hundred dinars, for a trial month with a girl at twenty dinars a night. He called another youth to him, saying: "Conduct your master." The boy led me first to the hammam, where he attended me with even greater care than the first time, and then to a pavilion which was guarded by four little girl slaves. These, when they saw us, ran to tell their mistress and presently the door was opened by a young Christian from the land of the Franks, more beautiful and more richly clothed than the girl at ten dinars. She took me by the hand with a smile and led me into a room of lavish decoration and surprising dyes.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundred-and-nineteenth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

"WELCOME TO MY charming guest!" she said; and then, when she had had me served with food and drink, more exquisite than that provided by the other girl, she wished to intoxicate me still more with the beauty of her voice and her skill on instruments of harmony, and therefore she sang to a Persian lute:

*O scents rising from the wet earth,
O flowers about Babylon,
Carry a song to my beloved
In that enchanted land
Where her lost kisses starve the world.*

I passed a whole month with this daughter of the Franks, and I must admit that I found her infinitely more skilled and gracious in the movements than my first mistress. I am sure that I did not pay at all too high a price for my delights.

After the boy had led me again to the hammam, I hastened to find out the white old man and compliment him on his excellent taste in girls. "As Allah lives, O sheikh," I said, "I could wish to live in your generous house for ever, for the eyes find joy here and the senses find delight." The old man was very pleased with my praises and, in return for them said to me: "Tonight, O guest, is with us a night of unusual festival; only those may join us who are distinguished patrons of the house. We call it the Night of Splendid Vision. You have but to climb up on to the terrace and judge for yourself."

After thanking the old man, I mounted to the terrace and found it divided down the middle by a vast velvet curtain, behind which there lay on a fair carpet, with moonlight shining upon them, a girl and her lover, close in each other's arms and kissing with their lips. At sight of the girl's unparalleled beauty I was struck into a daze of marvel and stood there, without breathing or knowing where I was. When at last I could move and knew that I would never have peace until I found out who she was, I went down from the terrace and, running to the girl with whom I had spent the last month, told her what I had seen. Realising my state of excitement, she asked me what need I had to occupy myself with the vision. "As Allah lives," I answered, "she has stolen reason and faith away from me." "So you wish to have her?" she questioned with a smile; and I replied: "That is the oath of my soul. She is my queen." Then said the girl: "That maiden is the daughter of our master, sheikh Tahir Abu Al-Ola, and we are all her slaves. Do you know the cost of a night with her? . . . Five hundred golden dinars, and she is a morsel worthy of kings and of that price." "By Allah," I exclaimed, "I am ready to spend all my fortune to hold her but for one night." And that night I did not sleep, for my spirit was troubled concerning the girl.

Next morning I dressed like a king in my richest robes and, presenting myself before the sheikh Tahir, said to him: "I wish that one who is five hundred dinars a night." "Give me the gold," he answered; so I weighed him over fifteen thousand dinars, the price for a month. He took them and said to one of the boys: "Conduct your master to your mistress." The lad led me to an apartment the like of which, for beauty and gold ornament, I had never seen upon

the earth. There I beheld that girl lying at ease, with a fan in her hand, and I well-nigh fainted from the emotion of looking at her.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundred-and-twentieth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

FOR SHE WAS like the moon at her fourteenth night, and the simple answer she made to my greeting had more of music in it than the cords of a lute. Indeed, indeed, she was beautiful and gracious and wrought exquisitely by the hand of Allah! I have no doubt that it was of her the poet wrote these lines:

*Lay she naked in the sea
All the salt would sweetened be,
Showed she in the sunset West
Eastward-praying Christian even
Would look back and think it best
So to gaze and lose his heaven.
I saw her gleaming in the night,
"O night," I cried in agitation,
"What is this phantom of delight?
Is it a tender ghost which haunts me,
Or a heated virgin wants me
For the joys of copulation?"
As in answer to this riddle,
She put down her hands and sighed,
Clasped the blossom of her middle*

*With her fingers, and replied:
"Fairest teeth need daily scraping
With an aromatic twig;
Chastest parts will sigh for raping
With a something bold and big.
Mussulmans, has this not wrung you?
Is there not a zebb among you?"*
*Here I felt him crack his joint
While the vehemence which swelled him
Lifted up the clothes which held him
To a noticable point.
So I let him out, but she
Started back in terror:
"I said twigs, and here's a tree.
Is there not some error?"*

I wished her peace, and with a killing languorous glance she answered: "Ease, friendship, and generous welcome to my guest!" She made me sit at her side, and maidens with fair breasts served us an initial repast of exquisite fruit, choice preserves, and a royal wine; roses and jasmin were given us and about us aloes and the wood of scented shrubs burned in gold perfume braziers. At length one of the slaves brought an ivory lute to the girl, who tuned it and sang this song:

*Never take wine except from a blithe boy,
For, if you hold him to you while you sup,
His cheeks' reflection strengthens the red joy
And more than roses blossom in the cup.*

After these preludes I grew bolder, my hand became braver, my eyes and lips devoured the girl. I found her qualities of knowledge and beauty so extraordinary

that I not only passed with her the month for which I had already paid, but continued to weigh out gold to the old white man, her father, month after month, until I had not a single dinar of those riches which I had brought with me from the land of Oman. When I knew that I would have to separate from her, my tears fell in rivers down my cheeks and night and day were one to me.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundred-and-twenty-first Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

SEEING ME THUS, she asked the reason of my tears and I answered: "Dear mistress, I weep because I have no more money. A poet has said:

*Poverty makes us strangers in our home,
But money gives us country when we roam.*

I weep, light of my eyes, because I fear to lose you." Then said she: "When one of the clients of this house is ruined by the house, my father allows him to remain for three days longer, enjoying the accustomed pleasures without payment; after that, he requests him to be gone and show his face no more. But you, my dear, my beloved one, need have no fear of this fate, for I will find means to keep you by me as long as you wish to stay. I have my own fortune at my disposal; even my father does not know how

great it is. I will give you five hundred dinars, the price of one night with me, and you must hand them to my father, agreeing to pay him day by day in future. Thinking that you have still money, he will accept your condition; and, when he brings the money to me, as he always does, I will hand it to you and you can pay for another night. Thus we shall be together for as long as Allah wills or until you grow weary of me."

For very joy I became as light as a flight of birds; I kissed the girl's hands and thanked her; for a whole year I remained in this new way, as happy as a cock among the hens.

At the end of that time, as ill luck would have it, my dear one grievously slapped one of her slaves in a moment of anger and, out of revenge, the woman ran and told the whole plot to the old man.

The sheikh Tahir Al-Ola leapt to his feet and came to find me where I lay without misgiving at the side of my love, playing with her in gallantry. After attracting my attention, the old man cried: "When one of my clients is ruined, it is my custom to entertain him for three days; but you have already enjoyed my hospitality by fraud for a whole year, eating, drinking, and coupling at your ease . . . Ho, you slaves, turn this son of a bugger into the street!" The slaves stripped me and cast me outside the door, with ten small silver pieces and an old patched cloak for sole resource. The white old man cried after me: "Begone, for I do not wish to beat or curse you; but, if you stay for another hour in our city of Baghdad, the blood of your head shall answer for it."

Thus, dear guests, I was exiled from my mistress into a city which I knew not, though I had dwelt within it for many months. All the sorrows of the

world weighed upon my heart. In my great despair I cried: "Behold, I, who came across the sea with a thousand thousand golden dinars and the price of my thirty ships, have spent all my fortune with that calamitous old man and now stand here naked, heart-broken, and humiliated! There is no power or might save in Allah, the High, the Glorious!" These gloomy thoughts accompanied me to the banks of the Tigris, where I found a boat about to go down to Bassora, and arranged with the captain to work my passage as a common sailor.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundred-and-twenty-second Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

AS SOON AS I came to Bassora, hunger drove me towards the market and there I was noticed by a certain seller of spices, who came up to me and threw his arms about my neck. This man, who had been a friend of my father, asked how I did, and I told him the whole of my story from beginning to end. "As Allah lives," he said, "these are not the acts of a sane man! But what is past is past. Have you any plans?" When I answered that I had none, he went on: "Will you stay with me and keep my accounts for a daily wage of a silver dinar, with food and drink thrown in?" I gratefully accepted and stayed with him as a clerk, keeping account of all his incomings and outgoings, until I had saved a hundred dinars. Then I hired a little lodging by the seashore and sat

down to wait the arrival of some ship loaded with far-brought merchandise, that I might buy a profitable lading with my money and return to sell it at Baghdad, where I hoped to see my love again.

Fortune brought me such a ship as I expected and, mingling with the other merchants, I went aboard her. Soon two men came on deck and, sitting upon chairs, had their merchandise spread out before them. Our eyes were dazzled with pearls, coral, rubies, agates, hyacinths, and every colour of great gem. One of the men turned to the landsmen, saying: "O merchants, there will be no sale today, for we are weary with the sea. I have only shown you these to give you a taste of our quality." But the merchants so pressed him to sell that at last he consented and had the crier cry the jewels piece by piece. The merchants bid one against the other so excitedly that the first little bag of jewels reached four hundred dinars. At that moment the owner, who had known me in the old days when my father was the commercial king of Oman, turned to me and asked me why I did not bid. "As Allah lives, my master," I replied, "I have only a hundred dinars in the world." To make this confession confused me and tears began to pour from my eyes, so that the owner clapped his hand together, crying: "O youth of Oman, has all your great fortune gone?" He so pitied me that he turned to the merchants and proclaimed aloud: "Witness, all of you, that I sell the bag, with all jewels which are in it, to this young man for a hundred dinars, though I know well that its contents in gems and precious metals are worth more than a thousand. It is, in fact, a gift from me to him." The astonished merchants bore witness to the transaction, and the owner handed over to me not only the bag, but also the chair and carpet which

he had brought on deck. I thanked him heartily and carried my new possessions to the market of the jewellers.

There I hired a shop and began to buy and sell, making a good daily profit. Among the precious things in the bag I found a little piece of dark red shell which, to judge by the characters graven upon its two faces in the form of ants' legs, seemed to be an amulet made by some master of amulets. It weighed half a pound; but its use and value I was unable to determine. I had it cried many times in the market, but fifteen dirhams was the highest bid. As I was unwilling to let it go at this price and hoped that time might bring me a better bargain, I threw the piece of shell into a corner of my shop, where it remained unobserved for a whole year.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundred-and-twenty-third Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

ONE DAY, AS I was sitting in my shop, a stranger entered who wished me peace; then, noticing the piece of shell in spite of the dust which covered it, he cried: "Praise be to Allah, at last I have found it!" He carried the thing to his lips and brow, saying to me: "Do you wish to sell, my master?" "Certainly," I replied. "How much?" said he. "How much will you offer?" said I. "Twenty gold dinars," said he. As this appeared to me a large sum, I thought the stranger was having a jest with me; so I coldly

bade him be gone upon his way; but he, supposing I found the sum too little, increased it to fifty dinars. More and more certain that he was laughing in his sleeve, I not only kept silence but even pretended not to notice that he was there, hoping that he would go away. Then he offered a thousand dinars.

When I did not answer, the man smiled at my angry silence, and said: "Why will you not consider my offer?" "Begone upon your way!" I exclaimed; and on this he increased the price, thousand by thousand, until twenty thousand dinars.

Attracted by such strange bargaining, neighbours and passers crowded into the shop and began to lift their voices against me, saying: "We must not let him ask more for a miserable little piece of shell!" Others exclaimed: "By Allah, a hard head and empty eyes! If he will not sell, we will throw him out of the city!"

As I did not know what to think and wished to make an end, I said to the stranger: "Do you wish to buy or are you having a joke?" "Do you wish to sell, or are you having a joke?" he retorted. "To sell," I said, and he replied: "My last price is thirty thousand dinars; let us conclude the bargain." Then I turned to the crowd, saying: "I call upon you to witness this sale. But, first, I insist upon knowing for what purpose the purchaser wishes this piece of shell." "First let us make the sale," the man objected, "then I will tell you the virtues and uses of the thing. "I sell it," I said; and he exclaimed: "Allah is my witness!" Then he produced a sack, bursting with gold, and weighed over to me thirty thousand dinars, took the amulet, and placed it in his pocket. "It is mine, now?" he asked with a deep sigh; and when I answered that it was indeed his, he,

in his turn, addressed himself to the crowd: "Be witnesses that he has sold me the amulet and received the agreed price of thirty thousand dinars!" When the people began to drift away, he came up to me and said in a tone of ironical pity: "Poor fellow, if Allah had given you the sense to hold back in a bargain, you could have made me pay not thirty thousand, not a hundred thousand, but a thousand thousand dinars."

When I heard these words and knew that I had been cheated of a fabulous sum because of my lack of merchant's genius, I felt a great turning and upset within me; some convulsion in my body drew down the blood from my face and sent up in its stead the yellow colour which I have kept ever since, and which so attracted your attention this evening.

It was a long time before I could find words to say: "Tell me now the use and virtue of this amulet." The stranger answered:

"The king of India has a beloved daughter, who is more beautiful than any other woman upon the earth: but she is subject to violent headaches. When her father, the king, had made an end of all the resources of medicine, he called together the greatest writers, scientists, and holy men in his kingdom; but none of them could find a cure for the headaches."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundred-and-twenty-fourth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

"THEN I, who also was present, said to the king: 'My lord, I know a man called Saadulla, a Baby-

lonian, who has no equal in all the earth for a knowledge of the remedies which you require. Would you think fit to send for him?' 'Fetch him yourself,' answered the king; and I went on: 'Give me a thousand thousand dinars, a morsel of dark red shell, and a valuable present.' The king provided me with these things and I at once journeyed from India to Babylon, where I made myself known to the sage Saadulla and put the money and the present into his hands. Then I gave him the piece of shell and begged him to prepare me a sovran amulet against headaches. The Babylonian consulted the stars for seven whole months, and then, on an auspicious day, graved mysterious characters on the two faces of the shell, even as you have seen yourself. Without delay I journeyed back to India and gave my treasure to the king.

"He entered his daughter's room and found her chained by four chains to the four corners of the apartment, as had been ordered so that she might not throw herself from the window in an excess of her pain. As soon as he placed the amulet on her brow she was utterly cured and the king, in his joy, loaded me with rich presents and made an intimate friend of me. The princess attached the amulet to a thread round her neck and never allowed it to leave her. But one day, while she was taking her pleasure in a boat with certain companions, one of the girls accidentally broke the thread and the amulet disappeared below the water. Instantly the possession entered the princess again, and her head ached so violently that she became mad.

"The king's grief passed the power of words to tell; he called me to him and charged me to bring another amulet from Saadulla the Babylonian; but

when I arrived at his city I learnt that the sage was dead.

“Since then, with ten men to aid me in my search, I have scoured all the countries of the earth to find an amulet made by Saadulla the Babylonian. Fate at last led me into your presence and I have bought that which I had never really hoped to find.”

When he had finished his story, the stranger tightened his belt and went away, leaving me as yellow in the face as you see me now.

Without further delay I turned all my possessions into money, sold my shop and, being a rich man again, hastened to Baghdad. As soon as I entered the city, I flew on the wings of love to the palace of the white old man; for, day and night, the thought of his daughter had been with me, and to see her again had been the burning goal of my desire. Absence, I found, had added fuel to the furnace of my soul and lifted my spirit higher into the air of ecstasy.

When I questioned a lad who guarded the door, he bade me lift my head and look. Then I saw that the house had fallen in ruins, that the window from which my mistress used to lean had been torn away, and that desolation reigned darkly over the dwelling. Tears came to my eyes and I said: “My brother, what has Allah done to the sheikh Tahir?” The boy made answer: “Joy left our dwelling and sorrow came to us when a certain young merchant of Oman, one Abu Al-Hassan, went away. He lived for a year with my master’s daughter, but at the end of that time all his money was spent and the sheikh cast him from the house. It then appeared that our mistress loved him with great love; for his absence brought upon her a malady which was very near to death. The old man repented when he saw the mortal danger of his

daughter; he sent messengers into all lands to find young Abu Al-Hassan and promised a hundred thousand dinars for success. So far all efforts have been in vain and neither news nor trace have been found. Even today the girl is about to render her last sigh."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundred-and-twenty-fifth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

MY HEART WAS torn with grief at this recital and I asked the child for news of his master. "He has fallen into such a state of grief and discouragement," he answered, "that he has sold all his girls and boys, and has bitterly repented before the face of Allah." Then said I: "Do you wish me to tell you where Abu Al-Hassan may be found?" "Oh, do so, do so, my brother!" cried the other, "You will have given back life to a girl, a daughter to her father, a lover to his mistress; and you will have dragged your slave and all the relations of your slave from the most dire poverty." "Go and find your master," I answered, "demand the promised reward from him and tell him that Abu Al-Hassan of Oman waits at the door."

The little slave ran off, as fast as a mule escaping from the mill, and, in the twinkling of an eye, returned with the sheikh Tahir. The old man had changed; his fresh and youthful complexion had disappeared and in two years he had aged more than twenty. He threw himself weeping upon my neck and kissed me

again and again, crying: "Where have you been, oh, where have you been? My daughter lies at the gate of death because of you. Come in, come in, dear child!" When we had entered the house, the old man first threw himself upon his knees and gave thanks to Allah for my return, and then counted over a hundred thousand dinars to the little slave, who retired, showering benedictions upon my head.

Tahir entered his daughter's room alone, to break the good news gently to her. "If you will eat a little, my child," he said, "and then take a bath at the hammam, I will show you Abu Al-Hassan this very day." "O father," she cried, "are you telling the truth?" "I swear by the great glory of Allah that I am telling the truth," he answered; and she cried again: "Praise be to Him! If I may see my lover's face I have no need to eat or drink." Immediately the old man called out to me to enter, and I entered.

Dear guests, when she saw me, she fell into a swoon which lasted for many minutes; but at length she was able to rise. With mingled tears and laughter we threw ourselves into each other's arms and stayed thus motionless, in a cloud of joy. When, at last, we could pay attention to that which went on about us, we saw that the kadi and witnesses had already appeared in the hall; our contract was written out immediately, and our marriage celebrated for thirty days and thirty nights with unusual pomp and rejoicing.

Since that time the daughter of the sheikh Tahir has been my dearly loved wife; it is she whom you heard sing those sad airs by which she pleases to recall the grievous hours of our separation, in order that our present happiness may seem the greater by contrast. Yet how could it seem greater than it is, since we have

been blest by the birth of a son as beautiful as his mother? I will now present him to you, O guests.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundred-and-twenty-sixth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

SO SAYING, ABU AL-HASSAN, the yellow youth, left the company for a moment and returned, leading by the hand a ten-year old boy, as fair as the moon upon her fourteenth night. "Wish our guests peace," the father said; and the child did so with exquisite grace. The khalifat and his companions were as charmed with the boy's beauty and breeding as with the father's strange tale. When they went their way they were still marvelling at what they had seen and heard.

Next morning the khalifat, Haroun Al-Rachid, who had been pondering over the tale which had been told him, called Masrur and bade him assemble in the hall of justice all that year's golden tribute from Baghdad, Bassora, and the people of Khorasan. Immediately Masrur heaped up the shining treasure from the three chief provinces of the empire, until there was a hill of gold before the khalifat, of which Allah alone could tell the value. Then said Al-Rachid: "Bring Abu Al-Hassan to me." Masrur went forth and brought the young man trembling into the king's presence; Abu kissed the earth between Al-Rachid's hands and stood with lowered eyes, not knowing for what crime he had been fetched into the royal presence.

Then said the khalifat; "O Abu Al-Hassan, do you

know the names of the merchants who were your guests last night?" "As Allah lives, I do not, O Commander of the Faithful," answered the yellow youth; and Al-Rachid, bidding Masrur remove a covering which had been thrown over the hill of gold, questioned Abu Al-Hassan again, saying: "Can you tell if there is more gold here, or less gold, than that which you lost by over-hastily selling the shell amulet?" Astonished at finding the khalifat familiar with his story, the yellow youth opened wide eyes, and murmured: "O my lord, these riches are infinitely greater." Then said the khalifat: "Your guests of last night were—he who is fifth of the line of Abbas, his wazirs, and his companions. Also this hill of gold is yours, a present from my hand, to make up for the loss which you sustained by the sale of the talisman."

When he heard these words, Abu Al-Hassan was so moved throughout his being that a new revolution took place inside him and the yellow colour of his face sank down, to be immediately replaced by such sweet red blood that his previous white and rose was restored to him and he shone like the moon at her full. The khalifat had a mirror fetched and himself held it before the face of Hassan, who fell on his knees and gave thanks to the Creator. Then Haroun Al-Rachid commanded the gold to be carried to the young man's dwelling and invited him to become one of his intimate companions. "There is no God but Allah!" cried the khalifat. "Glory be to Him who changes His creatures and then changes them again, but Himself changes not!"

Such, O auspicious king, is the Tale of the Yellow Youth, continued Shahrazade, but it is not to be compared with the Tale of Pomegranate-Flower and

Laugh-of-the-Moon. Then cried King Shahryar: "O Shahrazade, I do not doubt what you say. Hasten to tell me the tale of Pomegranate-Flower and Laugh-of-the-Moon, for I do not know it."

THE TALE OF POMEGRANATE- FLOWER & LAUGH-OF-THE-MOON

AND SHAHRAZADE SAID:

IT IS RELATED, O auspicious King, that there was once in the antiquity of years, in days of long ago, a king called Shahraman who ruled over the lands of Ajam and lived in Khorasan. This king had a hundred concubines who were all barren, so that not one of them had given him a child, even a daughter. As he sat one day in his audience chamber among his wazirs, emirs, and nobles, talking with them, not of the weary affairs of government but of poetry, science, history, and medicine, and all such things as might make him forget the grief of his childlessness, his sorrow that the throne which his fathers had left him should pass to another, a young mameluke entered, saying: "My lord, there is a merchant at the door with a young slave more beautiful than eye has ever seen." "Let them come in!" cried the king; and the mameluke hastened to introduce them.

When the girl came in, the king compared her in his soul with the slim water of a fountain; also, when the merchant moved from her face a veil of blue silk starred with gold, the hall was lighted as if by a thousand torches. Her hair fell down her back in seven heavy braids which touched her anklets; each as the tail which sweeps the ground from the croup of a noble filly. She was royal and marvellously fine



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*"I do not wish to sell her, but to give
her as a present to your majesty"*

set; her body surpassed the delicate dancing of the ban tree. Her eyes, which were long and black by nature, shot beams which might have cured the sick and would most certainly have thrown the whole into a disorder. As for that blessing of Allah, her most desirable bum, it was so vast that the merchant had not been able to find a veil great enough to cover it.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundred-and-twenty-seventh Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THE KING MARVELLED at all these perfections, and said to the merchant: "How much, O sheikh?" "My lord," answered the other, "I bought her from her first master for two thousand dinars; but since then I have journeyed with her for three years to bring her to this place and in so doing I have spent another three thousand dinars. Also I do not wish to sell her, but to give her as a present to your majesty." The king was so charmed with this mode of address that he put a splendid robe of honour upon the merchant and gave him ten thousand dinars of gold. The man kissed the king's hand with many expressions of thanks and went his way.

Then said the king to the women of his palace: "Take her to the hammam and care for her until the last traces of her journey have been washed away; anoint her with nard and other scents; and install her in that pavilion whose windows look out upon the sea." These things were done.

You must know that the capital of King Shahraman, which was called the White Town, stood on the sea shore; and it was thus possible for the women of the palace to give the stranger a pavilion overlooking the waters.

The king hastened to her apartment at the first possible moment and was greatly surprised that she did not rise in his honour or pay any attention to him at all. "She must have been brought up by most mannerless people," he thought, and looked at her more closely. Then the beauty of her face, which was like the first shy rising of the moon or sun into a tender sky, made him forget her rudeness and he cried: "Glory be to Allah who has created beauty for the eyes of his servants!" First he sat down by the girl and pressed her tenderly to his breast; then he took her upon his knees and kissed her lips; then he savoured the water of her mouth and found it sweeter than honey. But she said no word and let him do as he would, without either eagerness or resistance. The king had a great feast served in the chamber and carried morsels to her lips with his own fingers, asking her very gently, from time to time, her name and the name of her native land. But she remained silent and did not even lift her head to look at the king; yet her beauty was such that he could not feel anger against her. "Perhaps she is dumb," he thought, "Yet it is impossible that the Creator could make such a body and then deprive it of speech. That imperfection would be unworthy of His hands." He called the slaves to pour water for her fingers and, while they were presenting the ewer and basin, took occasion to ask them in a whisper whether they had heard the girl talk when they were attending her. "We can only tell the king," they answered, "that, while we were

bathing and scenting her, coifing and clothing her, she did not once move her lips in praise or blame. We do not know whether she dislikes us or does not know our language or is dumb; we can only say that we have not seen her move her lips."

The king was astonished at this news and, supposing that her dumbness might come from some grief, wished to distract her. To this end he assembled all the women and favourite girls of the palace in the pavilion, that she might play with them and amuse herself. Those who could play upon instruments of music played upon them, others either sang or danced, or danced and sang together. All were delighted except the girl, who continued motionless in her place, with lowered head, crossed arms, and still unsmiling lips.

Seeing that his plan had not succeeded, the king felt his heart heavy within him and ordered the women to retire. When he was left alone with the girl he first tried to obtain some answer from her, and then began to undress her.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundred-and-twenty-eighth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

HE DELICATELY LOOSED the light veils which covered her and then took off, one after another, the seven robes of different colours which had been put upon her. Lastly he removed her fine chemise and wide drawers with green silk tassels. Her body shone

with the purity of virgin silver, so that he loved her with a great love, and, taking her up, pierced her young virginity. When this was done, he rejoiced exceedingly in his heart and said: "As Allah lives, is it not a marvel that the many merchants have left this so desirable maidenhead intact!" The king felt so great a yearning towards his new slave that for her sake he left all the other women of the palace, his favourites, and the affairs of his state; and shut himself up with her for a whole year, never tiring of the new joys which he discovered every day. But, during all this time, he did not succeed in drawing from the girl either a word or a nod or a sign of interest.

He did not know how to explain this silence; and at last gave up all hope of ever talking with his love. One day, as he sat beside his fair insensible mistress, his love for her welled up strong within him, and he said: "Desire of souls, heart of my heart, light of my eyes, do you not know that I love you, that I have left my favourites and my kingdom for your beauty, and that I still rejoice to have done so? Do you not know that I have kept you for my sole treasure out of all the world? Yet more than a year has passed and I have curbed the impatience of my soul and borne with your silence and your coldness. If you are really dumb, beloved, I pray you tell me so by signs, that I may finally give up all hope of hearing you speak. But if you are not dumb, I pray that Allah will soften your heart, and, of his great goodness inspire you to break a silence which I have not deserved. And if this consolation is not to be, may He at least grant that you get with child by me and give me a dear son who may succeed me upon the throne of my fathers. Alas, do you not see that I grow old, lonely and without a child, that I am so broken by grief and

years that even now I have no hope of impregnating youthful loins? Alas, alas, if you have the least spark of pity or affection for me, answer me, beloved! Tell me if you are with child or no; that I may die in peace."

The beautiful slave had listened as ever with lowered eyes and hands clasped about her knees; but now, for the first time since she had entered the palace, she lightly smiled. The king was so moved at this sign of relenting that he thought his palace suddenly lighted by a great fire. He exulted and, feeling sure that she would now consent to speak, threw himself at her feet and waited with his arms lifted and his lips half open as if in prayer.

Suddenly the girl raised her head and said with a smile: . . .

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundred-and-twenty-ninth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

"GREAT-HEARTED KING, lord, valorous lion, know that Allah has answered your prayer, for I am with child by you. The time of my deliverance is close. I cannot say whether I carry a little boy or a little girl below my heart; but know, also, that if I had not become pregnant by you, I had resolved never to speak a word for the rest of my life."

When his ears were rejoiced by these un hoped for syllables, the king himself, for very delight, could find no words to say; but his face lighted up and was

transfigured, his breast swelled, and he felt himself lifted from the earth by the explosion of his joy. He kissed the girl's hands and head and brow, crying: "Glory be to Allah who has granted me the two wishes of my heart, O dear light of my eyes: for I have heard you speak and I have heard you say that you are with child. Glory and praise and thanks to Allah!"

The king rose and, taking a moment's leave from his mistress, went and sat upon the throne of his kingdom in great delight. He ordered his wazir to announce the cause of his joy to all the people and to distribute a hundred thousand dinars to the poor, to the widows, and those who were otherwise in want, as a token of his gratitude to Allah (may His name be exalted!). These things were done.

The king then returned to his beautiful slave and, sitting beside her, pressed her to his heart, saying: "O my mistress, queen of my life and soul, now will you tell me why you kept silence, before me and mine, for a whole long year and why today you made up your mind to speak to me?" "O king," answered the girl, "why would I not keep silence when I came here as a poor stranger with a broken heart and stayed here as a slave, for ever parted from my mother and my brother, and far from the place of my birth?" Then said the king: "I understand your sorrows and I feel them with you; but how can you speak of being a poor stranger and a slave when you are mistress and queen of this palace and of all I have, and of myself, the king? These are harsh words. If you were sad at being separated from the folk of your house, you had but to tell me and I would have sent to fetch them."

The beautiful slave made answer: "O king, I am called Gul-i-anar, which means, in the language of my

country, Pomegranate-Flower. I was born in the sea and my father was king of the sea. After he died, a day came when I had occasion of complaint against my mother, whose name is Locust, and my brother, whose name is Salih. I therefore swore that I would stay no longer in the sea, but would climb on to the land and give myself to the first man who pleased me. One night, when the queen and my brother had gone to rest early and our palace was plunged in that great silence which obtains below the sea, I slipped from my chamber and, climbing up to the surface of the water, lay down upon the shore of an island in the moon-light. A delicious freshness falling from the stars and the kisses of the land-breeze wooed me to sleep; but I awoke suddenly in the grip of a man who, in spite of my struggles, lifted me on his back and carried me to a hut. There he stretched me on my back and would have abused me by force, but I, since he was ugly and evil smelling, gathered my strength together and hit him so violent a blow in the face that he rolled at my feet. I threw myself upon him and gave him such a thrashing that he no longer wished to keep me, but led me hastily to the market and sold me to the merchant from whom you bought me. My purchaser, who was an excellent and upright man, refrained from taking my virginity, because I was so young; instead, he journeyed with me and led me to you. Such is my story. When I first came into this pavilion I was resolved not to let myself be touched and had determined, at your first violence, to throw myself through the window into the sea and go to seek my mother and brother. It was through pride that I kept silence all this time. When I saw that you loved me truly and had left all your favourites for my sake, I began to be won over

by your kindness and, seeing at length that I was with child by you, began to love you and to put aside all thoughts of escape. For one thing, I would not now have the courage to go back to the sea, where my mother and my brother might die of grief on hearing of my union with an earth dweller and might not believe me when I told them that I had become the queen of Persia and Khorasan, the wife of the most auspicious of all kings. That is all I have to say, O Shahraman. And may Allah bless you!"

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundred-and-thirtieth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

AFTER THIS RECITAL, the king kissed his wife between the eyes, saying: "Charming Pomegranate-Flower, sea dweller, marvellous princess, light of my eyes, these are strange things you tell me. After this if you quitted me even for a moment, I would surely die . . . O Pomegranate-Flower, you have told me that you were born in the sea, that your mother Locust and your brother Salih live in the sea and that your father was king of the sea; but I know nothing of the lives of mermen and have considered all tales about them as old wives' tales. Since you tell me that you are a native of the sea I now know that such exist and beg you to make me better acquainted with the customs of your race. Tell me, for instance, how a human being can live or move in the water without suffocating or drowning; for that is a most prodigious thing."

Then said Pomegranate-Flower: "I will certainly tell you all I know: thanks to the virtue of the names engraven on the seal of Sulayman, Son of David, (prayer and peace be upon them!) we live and walk at the bottom of the sea just as you live and walk on land; we breathe the water as you breathe the air; and the water nourishes our life and does not even wet our garments; it does not prevent us from seeing, or keeping our eyes open; indeed our eyes are so excellent that they can pierce the long vistas of the sea and observe as well by the drowned rays of the sun as by the reflection of the moon and stars in the water. Our kingdom is much larger than all the kingdoms of the earth and is divided into provinces, each of which contains great and populous cities. The peoples differ as on earth, in manners and appearance: some are fishes, some are half fishes and half men, having a tail instead of legs and a backside, and others again, like myself, have perfect human form, believe in Allah and His Prophet, and speak that language which is graven upon the seal of Sulayman. We live in splendid palaces whose architecture has no equal on the land. Our homes are fashioned of rock crystal, mother-of-pearl, coral, emerald, ruby, gold, and silver; but pearls, however great and beautiful, are of little account with us; the hovels of the poor are built with them. Because our bodies are dowered with marvellous agility, we have no need of horses and chariots; though we keep such in our stables for public festivals and far journeys. The chariots are made of mother-of-pearl and gold, with seats of diamond; and our water horses are finer than any king has upon the earth . . . But, O king, I do not wish to speak any more just now of the sea countries, for I trust that Allah will give us a long life together in which to talk

at greater length on these interesting matters; for the moment, I wish to touch on a more pressing theme, the lying in of women. Our confinements in the sea are different from yours on land; and, as my own time is near, I am afraid that your midwives will deliver me wrongly. I beg you, therefore, to let me send for my mother, Locust, my brother, Salih, and the other folk of my house; so that, after I have been reconciled with them, my cousins and my mother may watch over my confinement and care for our child, the heir to your illustrious throne."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundred-and-thirty-first Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THE KING MARVELLED and made answer: "O Pomegranate-Flower, your wishes are my law and I am the slave of your commands; but tell me, O marvel of nature, how we can possibly let your mother, your brother, and your cousins know in time for your confinement? Even if that is possible, I wish you had told me earlier, for then I could have made the necessary preparations to receive them fittingly." "Dear master," replied the young queen, "there is no need of ceremony with my people; also, they will be here in a very few moments. If you wish to see the manner of their arrival, go into the next room and watch both the sea and myself."

King Shahraman entered the neighbouring room and took up a position from which he could watch

both what Pomegranate-Flower was going to do and anything which might happen upon the sea.

Pomegranate-Flower drew from her bosom two little slips of Comorin aloe wood, placed them in a gold brazier, and set fire to them. When the smoke began to rise, she gave a long shrill whistle and murmured some unknown words of conjuration about the brazier. At once the sea was troubled and opened in the midst; from the division there rose up a very handsome youth with something of the look of Pomegranate-Flower. His cheeks were white and rose; his hair and light moustaches were sea green and, as the poet says, he was more wonderful than the moon, for the moon dwells in but one sign of the sky and the boy owns all the houses of the hearts of men. After him rose a very old woman with white hair, who was none other than Queen Locust, and she was immediately followed by five girls of moon-like beauty, who were the cousins of Pomegranate-Flower and a little resembled her. The youth and the six women walked upon the surface of the sea until they were beneath the windows of the pavilion; then they leapt upwards, as light as foam, and jumped, one after another, through the window, from which Pomegranate-Flower drew back to let them pass.

Prince Salih and his mother and the cousins threw themselves upon Pomegranate-Flower's neck and kissed her with tears of joy. "O Gul-i-anar," they said, "how could you have the heart to leave us for four years without news of you, to let us weary in ignorance of where you were? The sea grew small before our eyes because of our grief, we had no pleasure in eating or drinking, for our sorrow took savour from the food. We wept and sighed both day and night, so that our faces have grown thin and yellow."

On hearing these reproaches Pomegranate-Flower kissed the hands of her mother and brother, and embraced her cousins again, saying: "I was guilty of a great fault against your tenderness when I left you without warning. But who can fight against her destiny? Let us now rejoice that we have again found each other and give thanks to Allah." She made them sit beside her and told them her whole story from beginning to end; but nothing would be gained by repeating it in this place. "And now," she said, "that I am married to this kind and excellent king, now that we love each other, now that I am with child by him, I have sent for you that we may be reconciled and that you may help me in my confinement. I have no confidence in earthly midwives, for they do not understand the women of the sea." Then said Queen Locust: "My child, seeing you in an earthly palace we were afraid that you might be unhappy and were ready to persuade you to return with us; for the whole goal of our love is to see you joyful. But, since you tell us you are happy, we have no more to wish. Without doubt it would have been tempting destiny to marry you with one of our sea princes in its despite." "As Allah lives," answered Pomegranate-Flower, "My happiness is now perfect. All delight, honour, and tranquillity is mine and I have come to the end of my desires."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundred-and-thirty-second Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THE KING HEARD every word of Pomegranate-Flower and, in his joy, learned to love her a thousand times better than before. His passion became the eternal fruit of his heart and he determined to give new proofs of it in every possible way.

Pomegranate-Flower summoned her slaves with a clap of the hands and bade them set the cloth, while she herself went to the kitchen and superintended the cooking of a feast. When great dishes of roast meats, pastry, and fruit had been assembled, she begged the folk of her house to eat. But for the moment they refused, saying: "We can do nothing until you have told the king, your husband, that we are here. We have entered his dwelling without leave and he does not know us; therefore it would be great incivility to leave him in ignorance while we enjoyed his hospitality. Go and tell him how happy we will be to see him and to take bread and salt in his presence."

Pomegranate-Flower sought the king, who was hidden in the next room, and said to him: "Dear master, you have doubtless heard the praises which I sang of you to my mother, my brother, and the rest, and how I assured them of my happiness in all things, when they would have persuaded me to depart with them." "I both saw and heard," answered the king, "As Allah lives, this is an hour of gold for me, now that I am certain of your love." Then said Pomegranate-Flower: "Hearing my praises, the folk of my house have become fond of you and I can assure

you that they love you dearly. They say that they will not return to their own country until they have seen you and bowed before you and spoken with you as a friend. I beg you come in now, for they greatly desire it, and I wish to see you together in friendship and affection." With that she led the king into the next room.

He wished the strangers peace most cordially; he kissed the hand of old Locust, embraced Prince Salih, and begged the company to be seated. Then Prince Salih expressed in complimentary words the delight of all at seeing Pomegranate-Flower the wife of a great king, and not the plaything of some brutal sultan, who would have deflowered her and then given her to his chamberlain or his cook. He told how greatly they loved Pomegranate-Flower and how, even before she had become a woman, they had wished to marry her to some prince of the sea. "But destiny sent her from the waters to the shores," he added, "and she has married according to the teaching of her heart." Then said the king: "Surely Allah destined her for me from the beginning! I thank you all for your approval and consent." After that, he made them sit with him about the cloth and talked with them for a long time while they ate. Then he himself led them to their apartments.

Pomegranate-Flower's family stayed in the palace amid special festivity, and rejoicing, until the queen lay in. At the time appointed she gave birth, between the hands of the old queen and her cousins, to a plump and rosy man-child, who shone with the brightness of the full moon. This infant was carried to Shahraman, his father, wrapped in magnificent linens, and the king's joy on seeing him was such as neither tongue nor pen can tell. As a thank-offering to Allah,

he gave great alms to the poor, the widows, and the orphans; he opened the prisons; and would have freed all his slaves, but they refused to be freed, as they were too happy under such a master. After seven days of unclouded rejoicing, Queen Pomegranate-Flower, with her husband's consent, called the child Laugh-of-the-Moon.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundred-and-thirty-third Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID :

AFTER THE NAMING, Prince Salih, brother of Pomegranate-Flower and uncle of Laugh-of-the-Moon, took the little one in his arms and, kissing him in a thousand fashions, carried him up and down the room and lifted him high in the air in his hands. Suddenly he leapt through the window into the sea and disappeared with the child.

King Shahraman uttered cries of despair and beat himself so violently about the head that he nearly died of it; but Pomegranate-Flower, without the least sign of affliction, reassured him calmly: "O king of time, do not despair for so small a thing; do not be afraid for your son; for I, who love him even more than you, remain perfectly calm, since I know that my brother would not have done as he has done if it were possible for the little one to suffer or catch cold or even get wet. Although our son is half of your blood he runs no danger in the sea, for he inherits from me the ability to live as easily in the water as on land. I am

quite sure that my brother will soon return and the child be none the worse." Queen Locust and the young aunts confirmed these words; but the king was not utterly reassured until he saw the sea open and Prince Salih emerge with the baby in his arms. The young man leapt from the sea to the window and, when he entered the room, it was seen that the child lay as peacefully as if in the breast of its mother, and indeed was laughing like the moon. As the king marvelled and rejoiced once more, Prince Salih said to him: "O king, I conceive that you were very frightened when I jumped into the sea with this small one?" "That was I, O uncle of my son," answered the king, "I despaired of ever seeing him again." Then said Prince Salih: "Henceforward you need have no fear, for he is now safe from all the dangers of water, from drowning, from suffocation, even from wetting; for the rest of his life he will be able to leap into the sea and use it as his natural element, since, by means of a certain marine kohl which I have smeared upon his eyelids, and the mystery of the Words of the seal of Sulayman which I have spoken over him, he has now the same birthright as the children of the sea."

Prince Salih handed the child back to his mother who gave him suck; then he drew a sealed bag from his belt and, opening it, turned out the contents upon the carpet. The king saw, blazing before his eyes, diamonds as great as pigeon's eggs, ingots of emerald half a foot long, strings of mighty pearls, rubies of an unknown red, and the thousand fires of marine gems; so that the room shone with those fantastic lights which are seen in dreams. "This is a present to excuse my empty hands," said the Prince, "When I came, I did not know where my sister was or that a happy destiny had led her to such a king. These gems

are trifles to those which I will bring you when I have time." The king did not know how to thank his brother-in-law for this gift, so he turned to his wife, saying: "I am confused by your brother's magnificent generosity: each one of these stones is worth my kingdom." Pomegranate-Flower thanked her brother and said to the king: "As Allah lives, these things are not worthy of your rank. We will never know how to pay our debt to you, even if we slaved for you a thousand years we should not be quit of our obligation."

The king warmly kissed Prince Salih and insisted that he, his mother, and his cousins should stay for another forty days at the palace, feasting and rejoicing.

At the end of that time Prince Salih presented himself before the king and kissed the earth between his hands. "What do you wish, my brother?" asked Shahraman; and the merman answered: "O king of time, though we are drowned in your favours, we wish to ask leave to depart, for our souls yearn towards our native sea. Also you must know that too long a stay on earth is bad for our health, since our bodies are habituated to the water."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundred-and-thirty-fourth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

"THIS IS A GREAT grief to me, O Salih," said the king. "And to us," returned the prince, "but we will

return from time to time to bow before you and to visit Pomegranate-Flower and Laugh-of-the-Moon." "Do so often, in Allah's name!" exclaimed the king, "I am indeed sad that I cannot accompany you all into your kingdom; but I have always been very afraid of the water." Then the sea dwellers took their leave and, leaping one by one through the window, disappeared below the waters.

Let us follow the fortunes of little Laugh-of-the-Moon. As his mother did not wish to trust him to nurses, she gave him the breast herself until he was four years old; with the milk he sucked in all the qualities of the sea. Because of this marine nourishment, the little one became stronger and more beautiful every day; the years brought him every advantage; by the time he was fifteen he was the fairest and most muscular prince, the most adroit in bodily exercise, the wisest, and the most learned of his time. Throughout the mighty empire of his father none spoke save of his charm and elegance; for his was the true beauty. The poet did not exaggerate who said of him:

*Young down paints black upon his rose,
Jade on his apple-flower,
Grey amber on his sea-born pink.*

*Until he bids
His murderers leap on these or those,
His murderers cower
Behind his sleepy lids.*

*Spent drinkers, if you seek
A wilder and a sweeter wine,
Look full upon his shapes*

Until

*Your longing and his shame distill,
Stronger than grapes,
A rose wine in his cheek.*

*His lovers hold opposing creeds,
Some say: lace-fine embroidery of night . . .
I say it is a chaplet of musk beads
Warm under crimson light.*

When the king felt the end of his life draw near, he wished to make sure that his son, whom he loved dearly and in whom he saw so many royal qualities, should mount the throne; therefore he called together the wazirs and nobles of his kingdom and made them swear obeisance to the worthy prince. Then he came down from his throne in the presence of all and, taking the crown from his head, set it upon the brows of his son and, holding the youth below the arms, caused him to sit upon the vacant seat. After this, to show that he had already transmitted all his power and authority, he kissed the earth between the boy's hands, kissed the hem of his royal robe, and went to stand upon his right hand.

At once the new king, Laugh-of-the-Moon, with the wazirs and emirs upon his left, held the diwan, promoting the worthy, setting down the false, defending the weak against the strong and the poor against the rich, with so much equity and discernment that his father and the old wazirs wondered to hear him.

At noon he went with his father to visit his mother, the queen, wearing the gold crown of his royalty and shining with a splendour as of the moon. Seeing him so fair, his mother wept for joy and, throwing her arms about his neck, kissed him with great tender-

ness; then she knelt before him and wished him a prosperous reign, long life, and victory over all his enemies.

For a whole year the three lived together in great joy, surrounded by the love of their subjects; at the end of that time old Shahraman felt his heart leap violently and had hardly time left for embracing his wife and son, and making them his last recommendations. He died in righteous calm and passed into the mercy of Allah.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundred-and-thirty-fifth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

POMEGRANATE - FLOWER and Laugh - of - the - Moon mourned bitterly for a month, without allowing any into their presence; and raised a worthy monument over the tomb of Shahraman, endowing it with the goods of the dead king, for the benefit of the poor, the widows, and the orphans. Queen Locust and the king's uncle, Prince Salih, and the king's marine cousins, who had already paid many visits before the old man died, came to take part in the public woe and wept that they had not been in time to see his end. All the king's relations mourned together, consoling each other as best they could, until, after many weeks, they a little succeeded in making the young man forget and even persuaded him to occupy himself again in the affairs of his kingdom. Reluctantly he put on new royal robes, worked with gold and diamonds, and,

setting the crown again upon his head, resumed the reins of justice and, for a further year, ruled admirably over his people.

One afternoon Prince Salih, who had not visited his sister and nephew for some time, came up out of the sea and entered the chamber in which the two were sitting. Pomegranate-Flower embraced him, saying: "How goes it with you, brother; and with my mother and cousins?" "Dear sister," he answered, "all goes well with them, and their happiness is perfect save that they cannot see you and my nephew more often." The brother and sister began to talk of one thing and the other, while they ate nuts and pistachios, and soon the prince began speaking in the very highest terms of his nephew Laugh-of-the-Moon. As he expatiated on the boy's beauty, politeness, strength, and wisdom, the young king, who was lying back with his head among the cushions of the couch, pretended to be asleep, as he did not wish to appear to be listening. Thus he heard all which passed between his mother and uncle.

Supposing the boy to be asleep, Prince Salih began to speak more freely, and said: "My sister, surely you are forgetting that your son is now seventeen, an age at which it is well to think of marriage? I myself, who know his strength and beauty, and also know that, at his age, there are desires which must be satisfied in one way or another, am afraid that some unpleasant things may happen to him. In my opinion it is necessary to find him an equal match with some princess of the sea." "That is also my opinion and chief wish," answered Pomegranate-Flower, "I have only one son and it is high time that he also had an heir. I beg you to recall to my memory the various daughters of our country, for I have been away from

the sea so long that I do not remember which are beautiful and which are ugly." Salih began to enumerate various princesses of the sea, carefully weighing their qualities and showing their advantages and disadvantages; but at the name of each, Pomegranate-Flower would answer: "No, I do not think that she would do; she has an unfortunate mother, or she has an unfortunate father, or she has a very long-tongued aunt, or her grandmother smells unpleasantly, or she is ambitious, or she has an empty eye." In this way she found fault with all the princesses. Then said Salih: "You are quite right to be difficult in your choice of a bride for the king, since he has no equal either in the sea or upon the land; but I have already given you a list of all the possible princesses. There only remains one of whom I might speak; but I must be quite sure that my nephew is asleep, since there are good reasons why I should not speak of her in his hearing."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundred-and-thirty-sixth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

POMEGRANATE-FLOWER WENT over to her son and felt him and listened to his breathing. The boy had eaten a plate of onions, a food of which he was very fond and which usually plunged him into deep slumber; therefore his mother was the more ready to believe in his pretended sleep and assured her brother that he might speak. Then said Salih: "Dear sister,

I take this precaution because I wish to tell you of a sea princess whose hand it would be very difficult to obtain, because of her father. Nothing would be gained by my nephew hearing tell of her until the affair is certain; for love enters more often by the ear than by the eye, especially among us of the Faith, whose women wear the veil of decency." "You are right," answered the queen, "love is at first a fountain of honey, but changes soon to a vast sea salt with loss. Tell me the name of the princess and her father." "Princess Jewel," answered Salih, "daughter of king Salamander, the merman."

"Ah, now I remember Princess Jewel!" cried Pomegranate-Flower, "She was only a year old when I left the sea and she was more beautiful than any child of her age. She must have grown into a girl of surpassing loveliness." "That is more than true," said Salih, "for her loveliness surpasses all that has yet been seen upon the earth or in the kingdoms of the sea. She is sweet, gentle, appetising, and of strange charm; I do not think that there could be a complexion equal to hers, or hair, or eyes, or figure; I am sure at least that there will never be such a backside again, heavy, tender, firm and self-possessed, curved deliciously each way. Palm fronds are jealous of its balancing; when the girl turns it, antelopes and gazelles flee away; when she unveils it, the sun is put to shame; if she moves she falls over; if she leans with it she slays; if she sits down the impression of her sitting may never be removed. Do you wonder that with such perfections she is called Jewel?" "Her mother was inspired by Allah to give her that name!" exclaimed Pomegranate-Flower, "I choose her for my son's wife."

During this conversation Laugh-of-the-Moon pre-

tended to be asleep, but all the time his soul rejoiced and his heart beat high with hope that he should possess the heavy charms of the sea king's daughter.

But Salih continued: "What shall I say of her father, King Salamander? He is a gross and brutal man, one worthy of all detestation. He has already refused many princes who came as the suitors for his daughter, has broken their bones and cast them with ignominy from his palace. I do not dare to think what welcome he would give to our request. That is why I am doubtful about the matter." "The business is a delicate one," said the queen, "We must ponder at length on it, and not shake the tree before the fruit is ripe." "Yes, let us each reflect and then speak together again," agreed Salih; and with that the conversation ceased, as Laugh-of-the-Moon pretended to wake up.

The prince rose as if he had heard nothing, and quietly left the chamber; but already his heart was burning with love and crackled within him as if it had been laid on ardent coals.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundred-and-thirty-seventh Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

HE TOOK CARE not to say a word of his feelings to his mother and uncle but, retiring early to rest, passed the night in a novel torment of love, revolving in his mind the best way of winning quickly to his desire, and not once closing his eyes in sleep. He rose at

dawn and went to wake his uncle, who had passed the night in the palace. "Uncle," he said, "I wish to walk on the sea shore this morning, for my breast is heavy and the breeze will lighten it. I pray you come with me." Prince Salih consented and, leaping to his feet, left the palace with his nephew. For a long time they walked together on the beach without the young king saying a word to his uncle; he was pale and had tears in the corners of his eyes. At length he sat down on a rock and, looking out over the sea, made up this song and sang it:

*Though the flames lick my heart over
And my soul is red with fever,
If you gave me choice of water
Or to see and burn for ever,
Sure, my burning ghost would wander
With a memory for lover,
With the Jewel, with the daughter
Of the sea king Salamander.*

When Prince Salih heard these sad verses, he beat his hands together in despair and cried: "There is no God but Allah and Muhamad is the Prophet of Allah! There is no power or might save in Allah! My child, I see that you heard my conversation with your mother and I am sorry for it, since your heart is already engaged, although nothing is yet done about the difficult match." "I must have Princess Jewel and no other," answered Laugh-of-the-Moon, "Without her I shall die." "Then, my child," said Salih, "let us go back to tell your mother and ask her leave for both of us to go down into the sea, to visit the kingdom of Salamander." But the king cried: "No; I do not wish to ask my mother for a permission

which she will certainly not give. She will be afraid for me because King Salamander is rude and brutal; she will tell me that my kingdom cannot remain without a king, and that the enemies of my throne will take advantage of my absence. I know my mother." Then he began to weep bitterly and added: "I wish to go with you at once to this Salamander, without telling my mother. We can be back before she notices that I am gone."

Prince Salih saw that his nephew was set in his desire, so, being unwilling to add to his sorrow, he drew from his finger a ring carved with the sacred Names and placed it upon the young king's hand, saying: "This is for your better protection beneath the water. I put my trust in Allah, whatever may befall . . . Do as I do!" With that he sprang from the rock into the air, and Laugh-of-the-Moon did the same. They both described a descending curve towards the sea and dived below its waves.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundred-and-thirty-eighth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

SALIH WISHED to show his nephew the place of his own dwelling, so that the old queen, Locust, and the young queen's cousins might have the joy of receiving him. Therefore, he led him first into the presence of his grandmother, as she sat among the cousins. When the old woman saw the boy, she sneezed with pleasure, and Laugh-of-the-Moon went up and kissed

her hand. Then his cousins embraced him with shrill cries of joy; and the old woman made him sit at her side and said, kissing him between the eyes: "O joyous arrival! O day of milk! You light the home, my child! How is your mother, Pomegranate-Flower?" "She is in excellent health and perfect happiness," he answered, "She has sent greeting by me to you and to my cousins." You will notice in this he lied, for he had not taken leave of his mother.

While Laugh-of-the-Moon was being shown the marvels of the palace by his cousins, Prince Salih told his mother of the love which had entered through the lad's ear at sole mention of the charms of Princess Jewel. "He has come here with me to ask her hand from her father," added the prince.

The old woman became very angry with her son, when she heard what had happened, and bitterly reproached him with having been so careless as to speak of Princess Jewel in the king's hearing. "You know very well that this Salamander is a violent man," she cried, "and you know very well that he is arrogant and stupid, that out of greed for his daughter he has refused many princes; and yet you could do no better than to betray us into a position where there is every chance of our being humiliated by a refusal and returning with our noses to the ground. In truth, my child, you should not have mentioned so much as the name of the girl in the boy's hearing, even if he had been put to sleep by a drug." "That is true," admitted Salih, "but the thing is done now, and he so loves the girl that he swears that he will die if he does not possess her. And is there so much objection? Laugh-of-the-Moon is at least as beautiful as the princess; he comes of an illustrious line of kings and is himself the king of a powerful earthly empire. That

foolish Salamander is not the only sultan in the world: what difficulties can he make which I cannot counter? He will tell me that his daughter is rich, our boy is richer; that his daughter is beautiful, our boy is more beautiful; that his daughter is well-born, our boy is better born. Believe me, dear mother, in the end I will convince him that he has all to gain and nothing to lose by such a match. I am the cause of this desire on the boy's part; therefore it is only right that I should be the negotiator, even if my bones are broken and I die for it."

Seeing that there was nothing for it but to let the affair go on, the old queen sighed and said: "It would have been better had it never happened; but, since this love was destined, I will let you depart, though much against my will. But I shall keep Laugh-of-the-Moon with me until you return, for I cannot expose him to danger. Go then, and above all be careful of your words, in case some inapt syllable should enrage that brutal king; for there is no end to the impertinence with which he treats the world."

Prince Salih filled two large sacks with valuable presents and, loading them upon the backs of slaves, set out over the ocean road which led to the palace of King Salamander.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundred-and-thirty-ninth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

AS SOON AS he reached the palace, Prince Salih begged an audience and this was granted him. He

entered the hall and, finding the sea king, Salamander, seated upon a throne of emerald and hyacinth, wished him peace with exquisite politeness and disposed the two sacks at his feet. The king returned peace and begged the prince to be seated, saying: "Be welcome, Prince Salih! I have not seen you for a long time and my heart has grieved therefor; tell me quickly for what you have come to ask; since he who gives a present expects a thing equivalent. Speak, and I will see if I cannot do something for you." Salih bowed low before the king, saying: "It is true that I have a desire which can only be satisfied by Allah and by the magnanimous king whom I see before me, the valiant lion, the generous man, whose glory, magnificence, liberality, politeness, mercy, and goodness are known over all the lands and seas, and form a subject of admiring conversation at evening about the camp fires of the caravans." King Salamander a little abated the terrible frown of his meeting brows, and answered: "Make your request, O Salih; it will enter a sympathetic ear and a heart very well disposed towards you. If I can grant it, I will do so without delay; if I cannot, the refusal will imply no ill feeling. Allah expects of no soul a content greater than its capacity." Salih bowed yet more deeply, saying: "O king of time, the thing which I wish, you and you only can grant. I would not have dared to come and ask you for anything until I knew that it was within the compass of possibility. The wise have said: *If you would keep a friend, do not ask the impossible*, and I, O king, (whom may Allah preserve for the happiness of all) am neither pretentious nor a fool. Glorious monarch. I come only as an intermediary. I come, magnanimous sultan, O generous, O greater than the greatest, to ask the hand of your pearl paragon, your priceless

gem, your sealed treasure, your daughter, Princess Jewel, in marriage for my nephew, King Laugh-of-the-Moon, son of King Shahraman and Queen Pomegranate-Flower, master of White Town, head of all those kingdoms which stretch from the Persian frontier to the extreme bounds of Khorasan!"

When he heard this, the sea king Salamander laughed so heartily that he fell over on his backside and continued to kick his legs in the air in a convulsion of merriment. At last he sat up again and looked at Salih in silence; but only to come out with a sudden: "Ho, ho!" and fall into a second access of laughter so loud and strong that it ended in a sounding fart. When he was calmer, he said: "In truth, O Salih, I always thought that you were a man of sense, but I see that I was mistaken. For where would be the sense in so preposterous a request?" Without losing countenance, Salih replied: "One thing at least is certain: King Laugh-of-the-Moon, my nephew, it at least as beautiful as your daughter, at least as rich, and at least as well-born; if Princess Jewel is not intended for such a match, for what sort of match, in heaven's name, is she intended? A wise man has said: *For a girl there is but marriage or the tomb*. That is why there are no old maids among us Mussulmans. I advise you to seize this opportunity of saving your daughter from the grave." King Salamander's mirth changed to great anger. Leaping to his feet with contracted brows and blood in his eyes, he cried: "O dog of men, is it for the like of you to speak even the name of my daughter? Are you not a dog and the son of a dog? What is your nephew? What was his father? Dogs and sons of dogs!" Then to his guards he cried: "Lay hold of this pimp and break his bones!"

The guards rushed upon Salih and would have seized

him; but with the quickness of light he eluded them and fled through the palace door. When he had gained the open, he was astounded to see before him a thousand cavaliers upon sea horses, steel clad from head to foot, and all men of his own house. They had been sent by old Queen Locust who, foreseeing her son's ill reception, had armed these thousand and despatched them after him in all haste.

In a few words the prince told them what had happened and ended by crying: "In upon this foolish king!" The warriors leapt from their horses, drew their swords, and rushed, a solid troop, into the throne room on the heels of Prince Salih.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundred-and-fortieth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

WHEN KING SALAMANDER saw this torrent of enemies surging up about him like the shadows of night, he remained quite calm and called to his guards: "Out upon this stinking buck and all his flock! Swords to their heads!"

Crying their war cries of: "For Salamander!" "For Salih!" the opposing forces shocked together like the waves of a tumultuous sea. The hearts of Salih's warriors were harder than rock, their turning blades called in the debts of Destiny. The valorous Salih, the granite heart, the master of sword and lance, drove through necks and breasts, leaping to and fro with a vigor which would have overset mountains.

What struggle and blood! What cries cut off by the points of the brown lances! What widowing! Steel crashed and bodies groaned with wounds, until all the lands below the sea re-echoed. But what are swords against Fate, what shield is there against the writing of Allah? After an hour the hearts of Salamander's men became even as clay pots, they lay thick in death about the throne. Then Salamander flew into such terrible anger that his remarkable testicles, which usually hung to his knees, were retracted to his navel. Frothing at the mouth, he rushed upon Salih, who met him with the point of his lance, crying: "O brutal and faithless, here is the shore of the last sea!" With a sounding blow he knocked him over on the earth and held him down, while his warriors bound him and fastened his arms behind his back. So much for them.

The first noises of the battle so terrified Princess Jewel that she fled away from the palace with one of her servants, a girl called Myrtle, and, passing over the floor of the sea, climbed to the surface of the water. In this way she arrived at a desert island and swarmed to the top of a leafy tree for safety, while Myrtle hid herself in the summit of another.

Destiny willed that much the same should take place at the palace of Queen Locust. The two slaves, who had borne the gifts for Prince Salih, had run away at the beginning of the fight and hastened back to the queen with news of the danger. Young Laugh-of-the-Moon had become most anxious at their tidings, feeling that he was the cause of his uncle's predicament and this ocean war. Being a little frightened of his grandmother, he dared not show his face before her, thinking that she would hold him responsible should any terrible thing happen to Salih. Therefore he took

advantage of the old woman's preoccupation with the messengers to mount to the surface of the sea, meaning to return to his mother in the White Town. Not being certain of his direction, he lost his way and came to the same desert island which harboured Princess Jewel.

He was weary when he reached the beach, and lay down at the foot of a tree. He did not know that this was the tree in which Princess Jewel was hidden, for he did not know that each man's destiny goes about with him, that it follows more quickly than the wind, and that there is no rest for the pursued; he did not know that which had been laid up for him in the gulf of eternity.

He pillowed his head on his arms to sleep and, raising his eyes, saw the face of the princess, taking it to be the moon in the branches. "Glory be to Allah who has created the moon to light His evenings!" he cried; and then, regarding the portent more carefully, recognised it as a girl's face, fairer than the moon would have been.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundred-and-forty-first Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

"AS ALLAH LIVES," he cried, "I will climb and catch her and ask her name; for she is strangely like the description which my uncle gave of Princess Jewel. Who knows if she be not the same? Perhaps she fled

from her father's palace at the beginning of the fight." He leapt to his feet in great emotion and, standing below the tree, lifted his eyes to the girl, and said: "O supreme goal of all desire, who are you and why are you mounted on a tree in this island?" The princess leaned forward a little over the fair youth, and, smiling at him, said in a voice which sang like water: "O charming lad, O handsome, I am Princess Jewel, daughter of the sea king Salamander. I am here because I have fled from my native land and the homes of my native land, and from my father, to escape the sad fate of the vanquished. By this time Prince Salih will have made a slave of my father and killed all his guards. He will be hunting for me throughout the palace. Alas, alas, O hard exile! O my poor father! Alas, alas!" Large tears fell from her lovely eyes upon the king's face, so that he lifted his arms in love, and cried: "O Princess Jewel, soul of my soul, dream of my sleepless nights, come down, I pray; for I am King Laugh-of-the-Moon, son of Pomegranate-Flower, a native of the sea. Come down, for your eyes have killed me, your beauty has led me captive." As if in a trance of joy, the girl answered: "Praise be to Allah, O dear master! You are really handsome Laugh-of-the-Moon, nephew of Salih, and son of Pomegranate-Flower?" "I am, I am; so come down!" he answered, and she continued: "How foolish was my father to refuse a suitor such as you! What better could he have hoped; where, in sea or land, could he have found another king so charming and so fair? O my dear, think not too hardly of my father's folly, for I love you with all my heart. If your love is a span, mine is an arm-length. Since I saw you, love has eaten into my liver and I am the victim of your beauty."

She slipped down the tree into the arms of the young king, who joyfully pressed her against his breast and kissed her everywhere, while she answered caress with caress and movement with movement. At this delightful contact Laugh-of-the-Moon felt all the birds of the woods singing in his soul. Therefore he cried: "Queen of my eyes, desirable princess, star who has led me away from my kingdom, my uncle Salih did not tell me a fourth part of the truth; the other three parts of your beauty were unknown to me. He weighed before me a single carat out of the twenty-four, O all gold." He went on covering her with kisses of a thousand kinds and then, burning to enjoy the benediction of her bottom, emboldened his hand to touch the tassels of the cords. As if to help him, the girl rose and, suddenly stretching forth her right hand, spat in his face, because she had no water, and cried: "Creature of the earth, leave the form of your humanity and become a great white bird with bill and feet of red!" Immediately the astonished king was changed into a white-feathered bird, with beak and claws of red, and heavy wings incapable of flight.

He stood looking at her with tears in his eyes, but she called her servant Myrtle, saying: "Take this bird, who is none other than the nephew of my father's greatest enemy, the pimp who has been fighting against my father, and carry him to Dry Island, where he will die of hunger and thirst."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundred-and-forty-second Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

YOU WILL UNDERSTAND that Princess Jewel had only responded to the young king's passion in order to approach him unsuspected and change him into a bird. This she did to avenge her father and his warriors. When the girl Myrtle had taken up the bird, in spite of its harsh cries and the despairing beats of its wings, she felt pity and could not find it in her heart to carry it to a cruel death on Dry Island. Therefore she said to herself: "I will take it to some other place, where it will not die but may await its destiny. Perhaps when her anger is abated my mistress will repent; and then she would be angry at my too swift obedience." With this possibility in mind, she carried the captive to a green isle, planted with fruit trees and watered by running streams; and left it there. . . .

After Prince Salih had bound King Salamander, he shut him in one of the apartments of the palace, and proclaimed himself ruler in his stead. He hunted all the place for Princess Jewel, but, as we know, he could not find her. When he was certain that she had disappeared, he returned to his mother, Queen Locust, and told her what had happened, asking at the same time for his nephew. "I think he is out walking with his cousins," said the old woman, "I will send to look for him." While she was speaking, the cousins entered without the boy. Searchers were sent out into every part and, when they were unsuccessful, all in the palace wept sorely. King Salih, with a heavy heart, sent a messenger to tell Queen Pomegranate-Flower of the loss.

In an agony of apprehension the young queen dived into the sea and hurried to her mother's palace, where the old woman, with long preamble, tearful silences, and chorused by the sobbing of the cousins, told the whole story to her daughter. "Your brother Salih," she added, "who has been proclaimed king in the place of Salamander, has sent searchers in every direction, but we can hear nothing of either Laugh-of-the-Moon or Princess Jewel."

The world darkened before Pomegranate-Flower; her heart was filled with the emptiness of desolation; and for many days nothing was heard in that palace below the sea except the loud grief of women.

The grandmother was the first to dry her eyes. "My daughter," she said to Pomegranate-Flower, "do not be too cast down by this misfortune, for there is no reason why your brother should not succeed in finding the lad. If you truly love him and would watch over his interests, you should return to your kingdom to rule in his place and keep his disappearance secret. Allah will provide." "You are right, mother," answered the queen, "I will return; but, oh, I beg you not to slacken your efforts for a moment, not to forget my son! If harm comes to him I will die, for I live my life through him." "I promise faithfully," replied Queen Locust, "Do not give way to fear, but keep as calm as you are able." Then Pomegranate-Flower took leave of her mother, her brother, and her cousins, and sadly returned to her own kingdom.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundred-and-forty-third Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

NOW LET US return to the green island where the relenting Myrtle had left Laugh-of-the-Moon, changed into a white bird with bill and feet of red.

When the bird saw the girl depart, he wept bitterly and then, being both hungry and thirsty, began to eat the fruits and drink the running water of the island, with mingled grief and astonishment to find himself in feathers. He tried his wings but they could not sustain him in the air, because of the heaviness of his body; so he resigned himself to Destiny, saying: "How would it advantage me to leave this place since no one would recognise me for what I am?" He stayed sadly in the isle and at evening perched in a tree to sleep. One day, as he waddled about with lowered head, he was seen by a fowler who had rowed to the island to spread his nets. The man was delighted at the magnificent appearance of this quite unknown bird, whose scarlet beak and claws shone so brilliantly against the whiteness of his plumes. With manifold precautions and slow skill he came up behind his quarry and cleverly caught it in his net. Then, rich in this noble game, he returned to the city from which he had come, carrying the bird carefully over his shoulder by the legs.

As he reached home he said to himself: "I have never seen a bird like this in all the years of my hunting; I will not sell it to an ordinary purchaser, who would not know its value and might kill it for his family to eat; rather I will take it as a present to the king, who will marvel at its beauty and pay me hand-

somely." Acting on this thought, he made his way to the palace and there, sure enough, the king was delighted with the bird, because of its scarlet and white colour, and gave the fowler ten gold dinars and sent him on his way.

The king had a great cage constructed of gold wire and, shutting the bird within, himself offered it maize and corn; but it would not eat. "I must try something else," said the astonished sultan; and took the bird out of the cage again and set white of chicken, slices of meat, and pleasant fruits before it. At once the bird began to eat with obvious pleasure, giving little cries of satisfaction and ruffling its white plumes. This delighted the king, who cried to one of his slaves: "Run and tell your mistress that I have bought a prodigious bird, one of the marvels of time; beg her to come and admire it with me and see the marvellous way in which it eats food which ordinary birds would not touch." So the slave hastened to tell the queen, and she came.

But, as soon as she saw the bird, the queen covered her face with her veil and, retiring indignantly towards the door, would have escaped from the chamber. The king ran after her and held her back by her veil, crying: "Why do you cover your face, when only I and the eunuchs and your women are present before you?" "This bird is not a bird, O king," she answered, "he is a man, even as you are. He is King Laugh-of-the-Moon, son of King Shahraman and Pomegranate-Flower; he was changed into this shape by Princess Jewel, daughter of the sea king Salamander, because of the victory which his uncle, Salih, had won over her father."

"Allah confound this Princess Jewel and all her works!" cried the bewildered king. "Tell me the de-

tails of the affair, my queen, in Allah's name." Then the queen, who was the most redoubtable magician of her time, told her husband the whole story. After listening attentively, he turned to the bird, saying: "Is this true?" and the bird nodded its head, beating its wings.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundred-and-forty-fourth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THEN SAID THE KING to his wife: "By my life, and in Allah's name, my dear, hasten to remove this enchantment; do not let him stay in torment." So the queen, after quite covering her face, said to the bird: "Enter this large cupboard, O Laugh-of-the-Moon." The bird at once obeyed by walking into a closet concealed in the wall, the door of which the queen opened for him. She followed, carrying a cup of water in her hand; and no sooner had she spoken unknown words above it than the water began to boil. At once she sprinkled a few drops on the bird's head, saying: "By the Magic Names, by the Words of Power, by the Majesty of the Omnipotent who created the sky and the earth, who raises the dead, who gives His destinies to man, I conjure you to leave this present form and to turn back to the shape He made!"

At once the young king trembled, shivered, and returned to his manhood; and immediately the older king, seeing a youth of unequalled beauty, cried out on the name of Allah that the lad was well named.

When he was a little recovered from his emotion, Laugh-of-the-Moon exclaimed: "There is no God but Allah and Muhamad is the Prophet of Allah!" and, going up to the king, kissed his hand and wished him a long life. In his turn the king kissed the lad's head, saying: "Laugh-of-the-Moon, I pray you tell me all your story, from your birth until today." So Laugh-of-the-Moon told his story, without omitting a single detail, and greatly astonished his host with it.

As soon as the recital was over, the king asked the boy what he could do for him, and the other answered: "O sultan of time, I would return to my own kingdom; for I have already been long absent from it and I fear that enemies of my throne may be leaguering together to usurp my place. Also my mother must be in great grief and anxiety because of me and I would not have these prolonged." Touched by the youth, beauty, and filial piety of his suppliant, the king immediately prepared a boat, filling it with his own provisions, tackle, sailors, and captain, and sent Laugh-of-the-Moon on board with a kind farewell.

The youth trusted to his destiny; but Fate had more adventures yet in store for him. When they were five days out, a furious tempest rose against the ship and broke her upon a rocky coast; and out of all the ship's company only the young king, who, as we know, was impervious to the seas, managed to save himself alive by swimming to the shore.

When he began to look about him on the beach, he saw a tall city, like a very white dove, brooding over the sea from the top of a mountain. And, down this mountain side, he perceived rushing towards him, with the rapidity of a hurricane, a galloping troop of horses, mules, and asses, as many as there were sands upon the beach. This frightened troop halted all about

him, and the asses, horses, and mules began to make signs at him with their heads, which seemed to signify: "Return from whence you came." When he showed that he intended to remain, the horses began to neigh, the mules to breathe heavily, and the asses to bray; but these neighings, breathings, and brayings were very sad and full of despair. Some of the animals even began to snuffle and weep; others gently pushed the youth towards the sea with their muzzles; but he would not be driven. Instead of retreating, he advanced towards the city; and all the four-footed beasts accompanied him, some walking in front and some behind him in a manner most suggestive of a funeral procession. This impression became all the stronger when Laugh-of-the-Moon recognised, as it were beneath the noises which they made, a vague chanting such as readers of the Koran utter above the dead.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundred-and-forty-fifth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

NOT KNOWING WHETHER he was asleep or awake, sometimes supposing that he was suffering a vision of fatigue, Laugh-of-the-Moon walked up the hill as a man walks in a dream; and, entering the city, beheld an old man with a white beard, sitting before the door of a druggist's shop. He wished the old man peace, and the latter, charmed by his beauty, rose up to answer his greeting. Then he signed with his hand for the animals to be gone and they went away slowly,

turning their heads from time to time in an intensity of regret.

Laugh-of-the-Moon told the old man his story in a few words and then asked: "Venerable uncle, what is this city and what are these strange animals who followed me here lamenting?" "First come into my shop and sit down," answered the sheikh. "When you have eaten, I will tell you all I can." He led the youth to a diwan at the back of the shop and brought him food and drink. When he had refreshed, he kissed him between the eyes, saying. "Give thanks to Allah, my child, that you met me before seeing the queen of this place. I did not speak of her before as I did not wish to spoil your appetite. . . . This city is called the City of Enchantments; it is ruled over by Queen Almanakh, a sorceress of extraordinary power, a devil in the body of a woman. Her desire never ceases to burn, so that each time a young, strong, and handsome stranger comes to this island, she seduces him and makes him mount her an infinity of times, for forty days and nights. By the end of that period he is completely worn out and she changes him into an animal; in his new form he recovers and adds to his strength and then she transforms herself into a female of his species, a mare or ass perhaps, and is again mounted repeatedly. After that she resumes her human shape and makes new lovers, new victims, of those she can find. There come nights when her desire burns so hotly that she is mounted one after another by every animal on the island. Such is her life.

"I love you with a great love, my child, and would not wish to see you fall into the hands of this unappeased enchantress, who lives only for those things which I have told you. You are more beautiful than

any other youth who has come to this island and, therefore, God alone knows what might happen if Queen Almanakh saw you! Those asses, mules, and horses, who rushed down the mountain side to meet you, are the other youths who have been changed by the sorceress. Seeing you young and beautiful, they had pity on you and wished to persuade you to go back into the sea; then, as you would not do so, they accompanied you here, singing the rites of funeral over you in their own way.

“Yet, my son, to live with Queen Almanakh would not be an unpleasant thing, were it not for the trick which she plays on her lovers in the end. Now, I am a man whom she both fears and respects, because she knows that I am more learned in the arts of sorcery and enchantment than she. But I assure you, my child, that I am a believer in Allah and his Prophet (upon whom be prayer and peace!) and make no use of my magic to do evil, for evil ever returns against the evil doer.”

Hardly had the old man finished speaking when a brilliant troop of a thousand girls, dressed in purple and gold, came towards the shop and ranged themselves in two lines in front of the door; to admit the passage of a young woman, more beautiful than them all, mounted upon a diamond-harnessed arab. Queen Almanakh, for it was she, dismounted outside the shop, with the help of two slaves who held the bridle of her horse, and, entering, saluted the old apothecary with marked respect. Then she seated herself on the diwan and looked at Laugh-of-the-Moon with half-closed eyes.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundred-and-forty-sixth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

AND WHAT A LOOK that was: long and piercing, sweet and shining! Laugh-of-the-Moon felt himself transfixed as by a javelin or heated sword; but presently the young queen turned to the sheikh, saying: "O Abderrahman, where did you find such a youth?" "He is my brother's son," answered the old man, "He has come to visit me." Then said she: "He is very beautiful; would you be willing to lend him to me for one night only? I will simply talk with him; you can have him back intact in the morning." "Will you swear not to try your sorcery upon him?" asked Abderrahman; and she replied: "I swear it before the Master of Magic and before you, venerable uncle." With that she gave the old man a thousand gold dinars to show her gratitude and, mounting Laugh-of-the-Moon upon a wonderful horse, rode with him to the palace. Upon the way he looked like a moon riding among stars.

The young king, who was determined to let Destiny have its course, said no word and allowed himself to be taken along, without showing his feelings in any way.

Almanakh, the sorceress, who felt her entrails burning for this youth more than they had ever burned before, hastened him into a hall with walls of solid gold, the air of which was refreshed by a fountain falling into a basin of turquoise. She threw herself with him upon a large ivory bed and began to caress him in so strange a fashion that all the birds of his being danced and sang. She was not brutal but very deli-

cate; incalculable for number and variety were the assaults of this cock upon that indefatigable hen. "As Allah lives," he said to himself, "she is infinitely expert. She does not bustle me; she takes her time and gives me mine. I am sure that Princess Jewel cannot be so marvellous; I would wish to stay here all my life without a thought of my kindom or of Salaman-der's daughter."

In fact he stayed forty days and forty nights, passing the time with the young magician in feasting, dancing, singing, kissing, moving, mounting, coupling, and the like; so that pleasure was added to joy and joy to pleasure.

From time to time Almanakh would say as a jest: "O eye of mine, would you rather be with your uncle in his shop?" and he would answer: "As Allah lives, my mistress, my uncle is a poor seller of drugs, but you are the elixir of life itself!"

When the evening of the fortieth day had come, Almanakh seemed more agitated than usual by the great number of their couplings. She lay down to sleep; but, at midnight, Laugh-of-the-Moon, who pretended to be sleeping at her side, saw her rise from the bed with her face on fire from some emotion. She went to the middle of the hall and, taking a handful of barley from a copper tray, threw it into the water of the fountain. After a few moments the barley germinated, stalks came up out of the water; their ears ripened and turned gold. Then the sorceress gathered the new grains and, after pounding them in a marble mortar, mixed with them certain powders taken from boxes. From this paste she kneaded a cake which she cooked slowly on the hot coals of a stove and, wrapping in a napkin, shut away in a cupboard. Finally she returned to the bed and slept.

In the morning Laugh-of-the-Moon, who had forgotten old Abderrahman, called him to mind and decided that it would be as well to inform him of the queen's actions during the night. He therefore made his way to the shop, where the old man embraced him with effusion and bade him be seated, saying: "I trust, my son, that you have nothing to complain of in the sorceress Almanakh, although she is an unbeliever." "As Allah lives, good uncle," answered the boy, "she has always treated me with great delicacy, in no way forcing me; but last night, seeing her rise from our bed with an inflamed face, I pretended to be asleep and beheld her at a business which frightened me. I have come to consult you about it." And he told the old man of his mistress's nocturnal practice.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundred-and-forty-seventh Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

ABDERRAHMAN GREW VERY angry, and cried: "O wicked and perjured woman, is this how you keep an oath? Will nothing hold you from your accursed magic? It is time that I drew towards an end with you." He took from a cupboard a cake similar in every way to that made by the sorceress and, wrapping it in a handkerchief, gave it to Laugh-of-the-Moon, with these words: "This cake will make her mischief recoil on her own head; for it is with such cakes that she transforms her lovers after their forty days. You must be careful not to eat a crumb of the one she

gives you and must bring it about that she eats some of this. When she has eaten, do and say all she has done and said in trying to magic you; thus you will be able to change her into any animal you please. As soon as she is transformed, get on her back and bring her to me. I will know what to do with her." The young king thanked the kindly sheikh and returned to the palace.

There he found Almanakh waiting for him in the garden, seated before a loaded cloth, which bore her midnight cake upon a dish in the middle. When she complained of his absence, he answered: "Dear mistress, I had not seen my uncle for a long time, so I went to visit him. He received me very kindly and gave me food: among other things, there were certain cakes which tasted so delicious that I could not help bringing you one." So saying, he took the cake out of its wrapping; and the queen, who did not want to anger him as yet, broke off a morsel and swallowed it. Then she offered her cake to Laugh-of-the-Moon, who took a piece of it, which he let slip into the opening of his garment while making a feint to swallow it.

At once the sorceress, thinking that he had eaten of the cake, rose swiftly and sprinkled him with a little water from the nearby fountain, crying: "O weakened youth, become a powerful ass!"

Great was her astonishment when she saw the young man, instead of turning to an ass, rise, in his turn, and sprinkle her with the water, crying: "O traitress, become an ass!" Before she could recover from her surprise, Almanakh became an ass; and the prince, leaping upon her back, rode her to the shop of Abder-rahman. He handed over the ass to the old man, while she kicked and struggled in anger.

The sheikh passed a double chain about the beast's

neck and fixed it to a ring in the wall. Then he said: "Now, my child, I must occupy myself in restoring the affairs of our city to order. I will begin by turning back all those poor young men into their original shapes; but before I start on that work, though I am very loath to be separated from you, I am willing to send you back to your kingdom by the shortest road, so that the people there may throw aside their grief."

The old man put two fingers between his lips and gave a long, loud whistle, which conjured up a mighty four-winged Jinni. This appearance stood on the point of his toes and asked why he had been summoned. "O Light," commanded the sage, "will you take King Laugh-of-the-Moon upon your shoulders and carry him carefully to his palace in White Town!" The Jinni, called Light, bent down with lowered head; and the young king, after kissing the hand of his preserver, mounted upon the Ifrit's shoulders and held about his neck. The Jinni rose in the air and flew off as swiftly as a carrier dove, making a noise with his wings as of a windmill. Tirelessly he journeyed for a day and night, covering a distance of six months, and, coming to White Town, set down his burden upon the terrace of the palace. Then he disappeared.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundred-and-forty-eighth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

LAUGH-OF-THE-MOON, his heart uplifted by the breezes of his native land, hastened to find the room

in which his mother now used to weep quietly, hiding the cause of her sorrow for fear of usurpers. He raised the curtain and saw, not only his mother, but also old Queen Locust, King Salih, and the cousins, who had all come to visit Pomegranate-Flower in her affliction. He entered, wishing them peace, and ran to throw his arms about his mother's neck. She fainted with joy on beholding him, but soon recovered and wept long upon his breast; while the cousins embraced his feet, his grandmother held one of his hands, and his uncle the other. They stood thus for some minutes in so great a joy that none of them could speak; but when at last they could find words they mutually told of their adventures and thanked Allah together for their reunion.

Later, Laugh-of-the-Moon turned to his mother and grandmother, saying: "Now only remains that I should marry. I still wish for Princess Jewel; for she is a Jewel indeed." "The matter is easy, now, my child," answered Queen Locust, "we hold her father prisoner in his palace." At once she sent for Salamander; but when slaves dragged him in, chained both hand and foot, the young king ordered him to be freed.

Then the youth went up to the sea king and, after begging to be excused if he had been the cause of those first misfortunes, respectfully kissed his hand. "O King Salamander," he said, "it is no longer an intermediary who begs for the honour of alliance with you; it is I, Laugh-of-the-Moon, king of White Town and of a great empire, asking for the hand of your daughter in marriage. If you do not give her to me, I shall die; but if you consent, I will be your slave and restore your kingdom to you."

Salamander embraced the youth and answered: "Q

Laugh-of-the-Moon, no one deserves her more, and, as she is a dutiful daughter, she will accept your suit with great pleasure. Now she must be sent for from the isle in which she is hidden." He called up a messenger from the sea and sent him to find the princess. The merman disappeared and shortly returned with Princess Jewel and the girl Myrtle.

King Salamander embraced his daughter and, after presenting her to Queen Locust and Queen Pomegranate-Flower, pointed with his finger to Laugh-of-the-Moon, who stood there dumb with admiration. "My daughter," he said, "I have promised you to this great-hearted young king, this valiant lion, this son of Pomegranate-Flower; for he is not only the handsomest youth of his time, but the most charming, the most powerful, the highest in rank and in nobility and, in fact, in everything. I consider that you are made for each other."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundred-and-forty-ninth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

PRINCESS JEWEL MODESTLY lowered her eyes at her father's words, and answered: "Your suggestions, dear father, are my rule of life; your vigilant affection is the shade in which I take my pleasure. Since you desire it, the image of this man shall henceforth be ever before my eyes, his name upon my lips, and his dwelling in my heart."

When the young king's cousins and the other women

heard this answer, they filled the palace with the shrill cries of their pleasure. Prince Salih and Pomegranate-Flower sent at once for the kadi and witnesses to write the marriage contract, and the bridal was celebrated with such pomp and magnificence that, in the ceremony of clothing, the garments of the bride were changed nine times. As for the other magnificence of that occasion, the tongue would become hairy in telling of it. So glory be to Allah, who unites beauty with beauty and holds back joy only that it may become greater!

When Shahrazade had finished this tale, she fell silent. Then cried little Doniazade: "Dear sister, your words are sweet, tender, and savoury! That was an admirable tale." And King Shahryar said: "Indeed, Shahrazade, you have taught me many things which I did not know. The tales of Sea Abdalla and Pomegranate-Flower have delighted me with their descriptions of that kingdom under the water. Do you not know some altogether devilish tale?" Shahrazade smiled and answered: "O king, I know an altogether devilish tale and will tell it to you at once."

ISHAK'S WINTER EVENING

AND SHAHRAZADE SAID:

THE MUSICIAN, Ishak of Mosul, Al-Rachid's favourite singer, tells the following tale:

I sat in my house on a Winter night, while the winds roared like lions without, and the clouds above spilled noisily over as if they had been great dark waterskins. I warmed my hands at my copper brazier, grieving that, because of the rain, the mud, and the darkness, I could neither go forth nor expect the visit

of a friend. As my heart grew heavier, I said to my slave: "Give me some food to pass the time." While the slave busied himself about my meal, I fell into a dream of the charms of a girl whom I had known at the palace, though I do not know why her memory, of all the memories which have blessed my nights, should have come so obstinately before me. So engrossed was I in my sudden desire that I did not see my slave standing by me with folded arms, waiting my signal to bring in the dishes and set them upon the cloth which he had already laid. Full of my dream I cried aloud: "Would that young Saida were here! Her voice is so pleasant that I should be no more sad."

I now recall that I said these words in a very loud voice, although my thoughts are usually silent. I was surprised to hear myself, and the slave opened his eyes widely.

Hardly had I spoken my wish when there was an importunate knocking at the door, as if someone was there who would not be kept waiting; and a young voice sighed: "A lover beats upon the door of life."

"Someone has lost his way in the dark," I thought, "or will the barren tree of my desire bear fruit?" I hastened to open the door myself and, on the threshold, I saw the so desirable Saida in a most unusual plight. She was dressed in a short robe of green silk and over her head was thrown a light stuff of gold, which had not saved her from the rain and the water tumbling from the terraces. She must have waded through mud all along the road, for her legs were mired with it. Seeing her so, I exclaimed: "Dear mistress, why have you run such risks on such a night?" She answered in that dream voice of hers: "How could I not listen to your messenger? He told me that your desire was great, and I came."

Although I could not remember giving any order for a message to be carried, and although I knew that my slave could not have gone to the palace while he was standing by me, I did not wish to show my love the strange misgiving of my heart; so I said: "Praise be to Allah that he has re-united us, turning the bitterness of desire to honey! Your coming scents the house and calms the heart of its master. My spirit so yearned towards you tonight that I would have gone to you myself if you had not come."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundred-and-fiftieth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

I ORDERED MY SLAVE to bring hot water and essences. When they came, I washed the girl's feet and poured over them a flask of essence of roses. Then I dressed her in a fair green robe and made her sit by me in front of the fruits and drinks. When she had drunk many times, I wished to please her by singing a new song which I had composed; though ordinarily I do not sing until I have been many times supplicated; but she told me that her soul had no desire to hear me. "Then, dear mistress," I said, "be so good as to sing something yourself." "Nor that either," she answered, "my spirit has no wish for it." Then said I: "There can be no joy without singing, eye of my heart." "You are right," she replied, "but this evening, I know not why, I only wish to hear some man of the people sing, some beggar from the road. Will you not go to the door and see if such a one is pass-

ing?" Not wishing to disoblige her and being certain that on such a night there would be no passengers in the street, I opened the door and thrust my head outside. At once, to my great surprise, I saw, leaning on his stick against the opposite wall, an old beggar, who grumbled to himself and said: "What a noise this storm is making! The wind carries my voice away, so that folk cannot hear me. Pity the poor blind man; for if he sings, no one can hear him, and if he does not sing, he will die of hunger!" With that the old man began to tap with his stick on the ground and against the wall, as if searching for his way.

Astonished and delighted by this happy accident, I cried out: "O uncle, do you know how to sing?" "I am supposed to know how to sing," he answered. "In that case, O sheikh," I replied, "will you pass the rest of the night with us and rejoice us with your company?" "If you wish it," he said, "take me by the hand for I am blind of both eyes." I took him by the hand and led him into the house; then I fastened the door again and whispered to my love: "Here is a singer who is blind. He can amuse us and yet not see what we are doing. There is no need for you to stand on ceremony or veil your face."

I made the old man sit before us and invited him to eat. This he did with great delicacy, using the tips of his fingers. When he was satisfied and had washed his hands, I gave him drink and he drank three full cups. Then he asked the name of his host and I answered: "I am Ishak, son of Ibrahim, of Mosul." My name did not seem very much to astonish him; he contented himself with answering: "I have heard tell of you; I am glad to visit your house." "I am delighted to receive you," I answered. "I have heard that you have a beautiful voice," he said, "Let me

hear it, please; for a host should give an example to his guest." At this I began to enjoy myself. I picked up my lute and, playing upon it, sang with all my master's skill. I took great pains with the finale, but, when the last notes had died away, the old beggar only smiled with a touch of irony, and said: "O Ishak, you are not far from being an accomplished singer and tolerable musician." When I heard this praise, which was rather blame, I grew discouraged and very small in my own eyes; so I threw the lute aside. I made no answer to what the old man said, however, as I did not wish to fall short in hospitality. "Will no one play or sing?" asked the beggar in a few minutes. "Is there no one else here?" "There is a young slave-girl," I answered. "Tell her to sing that I may hear," he said; but I objected: "Why should she sing when you have already had enough?" "Let her sing all the same," said he. My dear love took the lute unwillingly and, after a judicious prelude, sang of her best. The old beggar suddenly interrupted her, saying: "You have still much to learn." My girl threw the lute furiously from her and would have risen, had I not fallen at her knees and begged her to remain. To the old blind man, I said: "As Allah lives, dear guest, we have done our best and no man can do more. Now it is your turn to show your skill."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundred-and-fifty-first Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

HE SMILED FROM ear to ear and answered: "Bring me a lute upon which no hand has ever played." I

opened a chest and took out a new lute, placing it in his hands. He eagerly seized the sharpened goose feather and lightly touched the chords into a harmony. With the first notes I recognized that the blind beggar was infinitely the finest musician of our time; but my emotion and admiration were greater still when I heard him play a small piece in a mode which was altogether unknown to me. And I am not considered a beginner in the art. In a voice of which I have never yet heard the equal, he sang:

*She came by the dark roadway of the night,
She knocked, and with her knocked the tempest's
spite.*

*She cried against the wind about my latch:
"A lover beats upon the door of light."*

When we heard this song, my love and I looked at each other in a stupefied surmise; then she became red with anger and whispered, so that I alone might hear: "Are you not ashamed to have told the old man all about my visit in those few moments when you were at the door with him? O Ishak, I did not think that your mouth was so slack that it could not keep a secret for one hour! Such men as you are detestable." I swore a thousand oaths to her that I had been in no way indiscreet. "By the tomb of my father Ibrahim, I told the old man nothing," I said, and she believed me. Being quite assured that the beggar could not see her, she let me embrace her at my ease; sometimes I kissed her cheeks, sometimes her lips, sometimes I tickled and sometimes pinched her breasts; sometimes I nibbled her in the most sensitive quarters, so that she laughed and laughed. At length I turned to the old man, saying: "Will you sing us something else,

my master!" "Why not?" he answered, and, taking up the lute again, sang this:

*My hands, sure-fingered wandering her dress,
Get drunk upon her wine of nakedness;
So while the fuddled fellows fall and sleep
I bite the white cups for their wantonness.*

When I heard this I did not doubt that the old man was fooling us; so I begged my lover to cover her face. Suddenly the beggar said: "I wish to go and piss; where is the place?" I rose and left the room for a moment to fetch a candle with which to light him; but when I returned there was no one in the chamber; the blind man and the girl had disappeared. I hunted the whole house through, but did not find them; yet the doors were firmly locked on the inside, so that they must have gone out through the ceiling or by the earth. I have ever since been persuaded that it was Eblis himself who pandered for me on that night, and that the girl was unsubstantial, an illusion.

When Shahrazade had finished this tale, she fell silent, and King Shahryar, who had been much impressed by it, cried out: "Allah confound the Evil One!" Shahrazade saw that his brows were contracted, so, wishing to calm him, she told the following story:

THE FELLAH OF EGYPT AND HIS WHITE CHILDREN

THE EMIR MUHAMAD, governor of Cairo, tells this tale in his book of chronicles:

During my journey in High Egypt, I lodged one night in the house of a fellah, who was headman of

his district. He was old and very brown, with a greying beard; but I noticed that his little children were very white with rosy cheeks, light hair, and blue eyes. When our host came to talk with us, after serving us with good cheer, I said to him: "How is it that you, who are so dark, have fair children, with rose and white skins, with light hair and eyes?" The fellah drew one of his brats towards him and began to caress the boy's hair as he answered: "Their mother was a Frank; I bought her as a prisoner of war in the time of Saladin the Victorious, after the battle of Hattin, which freed us for ever from the Christian invaders who would have usurped the royalty of Jerusalem. That was long, long ago, in the days of my youth." "I pray you tell us the story, O sheikh," I said; and he replied: "Certainly, I will do so; for the tale of my adventure with the Christian maid is very strange." This is what he told us:

You must know that I am a cultivator of flax; my father and my grandfather sowed flax before me; also, by birth and stock, I am a fellah of this land. One year I was lucky enough to have a harvest of flax in such perfect condition that it was worth at least five hundred dinars. When I offered it in the market and could not find my profit, the buyers said to me: "Take your flax to Acre in Syria, for you can sell it there to very great advantage." Acting on their advice, I took all my year's yield to the city of Acre, which at that time was occupied by the Franks, and began at once to do good business. I relinquished half of my flax to the brokers on a six months' credit, and began to sell the rest retail with immense profit.

One day, as I was selling my flax, a young Christian girl came to buy from me with face uncovered and unveiled head, as is the manner of the Franks. White

and beautiful she stood before me, and I could admire her fresh fairness at my ease. The more I looked at her face, the deeper love entered into me; so that I took a long time over serving her and, when I had made up her package, let her have it very cheap. As she departed, I followed her with longing looks.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundred-and-fifty-second Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

A FEW DAYS later she came again to buy and this time I sold even more cheaply, though she did not bargain at all; on this occasion, she doubtless perceived that I was in love with her, for, when she came a third time, she was accompanied by an old woman, who stood close by during the sale and was with her on every subsequent visit.

When my heart was quite overthrown by love, I took the old woman aside, saying: "Do you think a present to you would possibly procure me enjoyment of that girl?" "I could procure you a meeting and enjoyment," she answered, "but only on condition that the thing remained a secret between us three and that you were willing to part with a little money." "O helpful aunt," I exclaimed, "if my soul and my life were the price I would give them. Money is a little matter." I then agreed with her for a brokerage of fifty dinars and, having paid her, sent her off to sound the feelings of her charge. Soon she returned with a favourable answer, and added: "Good master, this

girl has no place for meetings, for she is a virgin and knows nothing of such things. You will have to receive her at your house; she will come in the evening and depart in the morning." This condition I accepted with fervour and hastened to my house where, after having made due preparation of meat, drink, and pastry, I waited as patiently as I could.

Soon the girl arrived, and I led her on to the terrace, for it was Summer. We sat side by side and ate and drank together. Now, the house which I occupied looked over the sea; and the terrace was fair under the moonlight and the night was full of stars which showed their reflections in the water. As I looked at these things my spirit changed within me and I thought: "Are you not ashamed before Allah, under such a sky and facing such a sea, in a strange land, to rebel against His word and fornicate with a Christian?" I was already lying by the girl's side and she was leaning against me lovingly; but after this revulsion I called upon God to witness that I abstained in all chastity from this daughter of the Franks and, without even having set hand upon her, I turned my back and slept under the benign clarity of the sky.

In the morning the young Frank rose and departed, grieved and silently; while I re-entered my shop and began my selling. Towards noon the girl passed in front of the door, looking very angry, and I suddenly desired her again even to death, for she was a moon of all moons. In my own soul I cried: "What made you refrain your desire from this woman? You are a lusty fellah of High Egypt, not an ascetic or a sufi or a eunuch or a Persian weakling." Then I ran after the old woman and, taking her apart, said to her: "I would like another meeting." "By Christ," she an-

swered, "this time it cannot be managed under a hundred dinars." At once I gave her the hundred dinars; and that night the young Frank came to me again. But under the beauty of the naked sky I felt the same unwelcome scruples and, abstaining from the woman in all chastity, drew no more advantage from this interview than from the first. When she saw this was to be her treatment again, she rose in great anger from my side and went away.

And yet, next morning when she passed my shop, I felt the same desires; my heart beat thickly for love of her and I sought out the old woman. She looked at me angrily and said: "Tell me, in Christ's name, O Mussulman, is it thus that virgins are treated in your religion? You will never be able to come near her again, that is, unless you are willing to furnish five hundred dinars." Then the old dame departed.

Trembling with inward flame, I determined to gather in the full value of all my flax and to sacrifice five hundred dinars to save my life. I made all my money into a bundle and was about to carry it to the old woman when suddenly . . .

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundred-and-fifty-third Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

. . . I HEARD A HERALD crying in the streets: "Ho, all you Mussulmans who tarry upon business in our city, learn that our truce with you is ended. You are given a week to put your affairs in order and return to your own country!"

I hastened to sell what flax remained to me, called in my money on that which I had loaned to the brokers, bought merchandise suitable for selling in my own country, and left the city of Acre with a heavy heart. A thousand painful regrets for the Christian girl rode with me upon my way.

I journeyed to Damascus in Syria, where I sold my goods at unusually great profit, owing to the interruption of trade caused by the renewal of war. By Allah's grace, everything prospered between my hands, so that I was able to do a rich wholesale business in Christian prisoners of war. In this way three years passed and, little by little, the bitterness of my sudden separation from the young Frank was sweetened in my heart.

We continued to gain great victories over the Franks, both about Jerusalem and in Syria. After many glorious battles, the sultan Saladin, with Allah's aid, completely routed the infidels, led their kings and captains captive into Damascus, and took all their cities on the coast. Glory to Allah!

One day I had occasion to visit the tents of the sultan's camp in order to show him a very beautiful slave whom I intended to sell. I presented the girl to Saladin and, as she pleased him, let him have her for a hundred dinars. But the sultan (may Allah have him in His mercy!) had only ninety dinars with him, for he was using all the money of his treasure for the war. Therefore he turned to one of his guards, saying: "Take this merchant into the tent where we have collected the girl prisoners of our last engagement and let him choose one of them for the ten dinars which I owe him." Such was the justice of Sultan Saladin.

The guard led me into the tent of the captive

Franks, and, as I was passing among the girls, I recognized the first who caught my eye as the sweet damsel I had loved at Acre. Since then she had become the wife of a Christian captain in high command. As soon as I saw her, I put my arm about her in sign of possession, saying: "This is the one I wish." Then I led her away.

When we came under my tent, I said: "Damsel, do you recognise me?" She answered that she did not, and I continued: "I am the friend whom you twice visited in his house at Acre, thanks to my gifts to the old woman, first of fifty, and then of a hundred dinars. I abstained from you in all chastity, and allowed you to depart unhurt and very angry. I was ready to pay five hundred dinars for a third meeting, and now the sultan lets me have you for ten!" She lowered her head for a moment and then, lifting it suddenly, exclaimed: "That which passed in Acre was a mystery of the Faith of Islam; I raise my fingers and bear witness that there is no God but Allah and that Muhamad is the Prophet of Allah!" Thus she pronounced her act of belief and in that moment was ennobled in the Faith.

"As Allah lives," I said to myself, "I will not penetrate her this time, either, until I have freed her and married her according to the law." I went immediately to the kadi and, when I had told him of the affair, brought him back to my tent to write our marriage contract.

Then I went in to her and she conceived by me, and we dwelt in Damascus.

After we had been together for a few months, an ambassador came from the king of the Franks to Sultan Saladin in Damascus, to see to an exchange of prisoners, according to the terms of treaty between the

kings. All the captives, both men and women, were scrupulously returned to the Franks in exchange for our own; but when the ambassador consulted his list, he perceived that there was one woman missing, the wife of a captain in high command. The sultan sent his guards to find her and, in the end, they reported that she was at my house. The guards were sent back to fetch her and I changed colour when they came. I went weeping to my wife and told her what had happened, but she rose, saying: "Lead me to the sultan, for I know what to say to him." I conducted her, veiled, into Saladin's presence and there I saw the ambassador of the Franks sitting upon his right hand.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundred-and-fifty-fourth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

I KISSED THE EARTH between the sultan's hands, crying: "Here is the woman." He turned to my wife and asked: "What have you to say? Do you wish to return to your own land with the ambassador or stay with your husband?" "I stay with my husband," she answered, "I am of his faith and with child by him, the peace of my soul is not among the Christians." "You have heard?" said Saladin to the ambassador. "But, if you wish, you may speak to her yourself." The Frank remonstrated with and admonished my wife, and ended by asking her the same question as the sultan had asked: "Will you stay with your

present husband, who is a Mussulman, or return to your former husband, who is a Christian?" "I will never leave my Egyptian," she said, "for my peace is in Islam." Then the ambassador stamped his foot in rage, and cried: "Take away that woman!" So I took her by the hand and was about to depart with her, when the ambassador called me back and said: "An old Christian woman in Acre, your wife's mother, gave me this package for her daughter. She charged me to say that she hopes to see her again in excellent health." I took the packet from his hands and returned with my wife to the house. There we opened the cloth covering and found in it, not only the clothes which my wife had worn in Acre, but also the fifty dinars and the hundred dinars, knotted in the same handkerchief and with the same knot as when they had left my hands. Then at last I understood the blessing of my chastity and gave thanks to Allah.

Soon afterwards I brought my wife to Egypt. She it was, dear guests, who bore me these white children. May Allah bless them! Since then we have lived happily together, eating our bread as we have baked it. Such is my tale. But Allah is All-wise.

When Shahrazade had finished this tale, she fell silent, and King Shahryar exclaimed: "That fellow was a happy man, O Shahrazade." Then said Shahrazade: "Yet, O king, he was not more happy than was Khalif the fisherman with the sea apes and the khalifat." "What is that tale of Khalif and the Khalifat?" asked Shahryar; and Shahrazade answered: "I will tell it you at once."

THE TALE OF KHALIF
AND THE KHALIFAT

AND SHAHRAZADE SAID:

IT IS RELATED, O auspicious King, that there was once, in the antiquity of time and the passage of the age and of the moment, a fisherman in the city of Baghdad, whose name was Khalif. He was so unfortunate and so poor that he had never been able to collect the few copper pieces necessary for marriage; thus he remained a bachelor, though the poorest of his neighbours had wives and children.

One day he took his net upon his back and went down to the water early in the morning, before the other fishermen. He cast ten times without catching anything at all, so he grew angry and sorrowful, and sat down upon the river bank to nurse his despair. Soon he subdued his rebellious thoughts and said: "May Allah pardon my revolt! There is no help save in Him! He gives food to His creatures: that which He gives, no one can take away; that which He refuses, no one can provide. Let us take the good days with the bad as they come, and prepare a patient heart against misfortune. Ill-luck is like an abscess which will not burst and depart except under patient care."

When he had comforted his soul with these words, Khalif rose up boldly and pulled back his sleeves. Girding up his robe into his belt, he cast his net into the water as far as his arm might go. After waiting for a minute he took hold of the cord and pulled with might; but the net was so heavy that he had to use all his skill to bring it in without accident. When he had gently hauled it ashore, he opened it, with beating heart, and found in it a large one-eyed and lame ape.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundred-and-fifty-fifth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

“THERE IS NO power or might save in Allah!” cried the wretched Khalif. “We belong to Him and we return to Him; yet there is a fatality about this day which I do not understand. I cannot guess what will happen to me before the end of it. But all was written by Allah!” So saying, he tied the ape to a tree with a piece of cord and, brandishing a whip which he had with him, would have soundly beaten the animal in order to work off his ill-humour, had not the beast, with Allah’s help, moved its tongue and thus eloquently spoken: “Stay your hand and do not beat me, O Khalif. Leave me tied to the tree and cast your net once more, trusting in Allah. He will give you your bread today.”

Hearing these words from a lame and one-eyed ape, Khalif lowered his hand and cast his net into the water, letting the cord of it float loose. When he would have drawn it in, he found it heavier than before; but, by tugging gently, he succeeded at last in bringing it to land, only to find in it a second ape. This animal was neither blind nor lame, but instead exceedingly beautiful: it had eyes lengthened with kohl, henna-tinted nails, white pleasantly-separated teeth, and a rosy bottom, quite unlike the raw backsides of other apes. It wore a red and blue coat, most agreeable to the sight, and had gold bracelets on its wrists, gold anklets about its ankles, and gold ear-

rings in its ears. It laughed and winked and clicked its tongue when it saw the fisherman.

"Today is a day of apes!" cried Khalif, "Praise be to Allah who has changed all the fishes of the river into monkeys! So this is your beginning, O day of pitch! You are like a book whose contents are known from the first page. This would not have happened if I had ignored the advice of the first ape." So saying, he ran towards the tree, and cracking his whip three times in the air, cried to his first captive: "Look, O face of calamity, upon the result of your counsels! Because I opened my day with a sight of your blind eye, I am fated to die of hunger and fatigue." He brought the whip down sharply over the animal's back and would have raised it a second time, but the beast said: "Instead of whipping me, O Khalif, it would be better for you to go and talk to my companion. This behaviour will advantage you nothing, therefore do as I say. It is for your own good." Not knowing what to make of this, the fisherman left the one-eyed ape and returned to the second, who laughed heartily on beholding him. "What are you, pitch-face?" cried Khalif; and the fair-eyed monkey answered: "Do you not know me, Khalif?" "I do not know you, but if you will not answer you shall know my whip," returned the fisherman. So the ape made haste to say: "Such language is not suitable, Khalif; but if you will talk to me in a different strain and remember what I say, you may grow rich." Khalif threw the whip from him, crying: "I am ready to listen, O my lord the ape, O king of all the monkeys!" Then said the other: "I belong to the Jew money-changer, Abu Saada; he is fortunate and successful only through me. Mine is the first face he sees on waking and the last before sleeping at night. That is why he prospers."

Here Khalif interrupted: "Is not the proverb true then in saying: 'Unlucky as an ape's face'?" Then he called over his shoulder to the beast by the tree: "Did you hear that? Seeing your face this morning only brought me weariness and disappointment: you are not like your brother." "Leave my brother in peace," said the handsome ape, "First prove the truth of my words by fastening me to the cord of your net and casting it into the water. You will see if I am a luck-bringer or no."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundred-and-fifty-sixth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

KHALIF DID AS the ape advised and, when he drew in his net, it contained a magnificent fish, as large as a sheep, with eyes like two dinars of gold and scales which had the appearance of diamonds. As proud as if he had become master of the whole earth, he showed his prize to the handsome ape. "You see?" cried the beast, "Now gather some fresh grass and put it at the bottom of your basket; lay the fish on it and cover it with more grass. Then leave us apes both tied to the tree and carry your basket to Baghdad. If people ask you what you have got, do not answer; but go straight to the changers' market and find out the shop of Abu Saada the Jew, who is syndic of the changers. He will be seated on a diwan with a cushion at his back and two chests in front of him, one for gold and the other for silver. There will be boys and slaves, serv-

ants and assistants all about him. Set your basket down before him, and say: 'O Abu Saada, today I cast the net in your name and Allah sent me this fish.' When you have delicately removed the grass, he will ask you whether you have shown it to any beside himself. 'No, as Allah lives,' you must answer; for then he will take the fish and offer you a dinar for it. You must refuse. He will offer you two dinars; but you must refuse them also. Each time he offers, you must refuse, even if he is willing to give the fish's weight in gold. He will ask what else you want; and you will answer: 'By Allah, I will only sell the fish in exchange for a few words.' 'What few words are those?' he will ask; and you will reply: 'Rise up and say: "Bear witness, O all who are present in this market, that I consent to exchange my ape for the ape of Khalif the fisherman; that I barter my luck for his luck, and my fortune for his fortune." That is the price of my fish; for I make nothing with gold; I do not know its smell, its taste or its uses.' Then, O Khalif, if the Jew consents to this bargain, I will become your property; every day I will wish you good morning and every evening I will wish you good night; this will bring you good luck and you will earn a hundred dinars a day. On the other hand, Abu Saada the Jew will begin his mornings with a sight of this lame and one-eyed brother and will close his evenings with the same. Allah will afflict him every day with exaction, toil, or outrage; so that, in a short time, he will be ruined and reduced to begging in the streets. Carefully remember what I have said, O Khalif, and you shall prosper exceedingly."

"I gladly accept your advice, O king of all the apes," answered the fisherman, "But what shall I do with this one-eyed misfortune? Shall I leave the ac-

cursed thing tied to the tree?" "Loose both of us, that we may return to the water," answered the ape, "That will be best." So Khalif untied the ugly and the pleasant ape together, and at once they skipped down the bank into the water and disappeared.

The fisherman washed the fish and placed it in the basket with grass all round. Then he made off towards the city, singing at the top of his voice.

The people in the markets, being used to jest with him, asked him what he carried; but he answered with neither word nor look. When he came to the changers' market, he followed the line of shops until he found a great one where he saw the Jew seated majestically upon a diwan, with servants of every age and colour hurrying to do his work. He looked as if he thought himself the king of Khorasan; but Khalif nevertheless ventured into his presence and stood before him.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundred-and-fifty-seventh Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THE JEW RAISED his head, saying: "A kindly welcome to you, O Khalif; tell me now what you wish. If any has sworn at you, hurt, or hustled you, I will willingly go with you to the wali to demand reparation." But Khalif answered: "By the life of your head, O chief and crown of the Jews, no one has sworn at me, hurt me, or hustled me. This morning I went to the river and cast my net, in your name and with your luck, and caught this fish." With these words he

opened the basket and, lifting the fish gently from its bed of grass, held it out with pride to the money-changer. The Jew found the fish admirable, and cried: "By the Pentateuch and the Ten Commandments. I assure you, O fisherman, that I slept last night and the virgin Mary appeared to me in a dream, saying: 'O Abu Saada, tomorrow you shall have a present from me.' Doubtless this is the present . . . Now tell me, as you hope to be saved, whether you have offered this fish to any beside myself?" "As Allah lives, O chief and crown of the Jews," answered the fisherman, "I swear, by the true life of Abu Bakr, that no one else has seen it." The Jew turned to one of his young slaves, saying: "Carry this fish to my house and tell my daughter to clean it, to fry one half, to grill the other, and to keep all hot until I return." Khalif also said to the slave: "O boy, tell your mistress not to burn it. Show her the beautiful colour of the gills."

When the lad had carried off the fish, the Jew handed a dinar to Khalif, saying: "Take this for yourself and spend it on your family." Khalif, who had instinctively taken the coin, saw it shining in his palm and, because he did not know its value, cried aloud: "Glory be to the Lord, Master of Treasures, King of Riches!" He had already taken a few steps away from the diwan when he remembered the ape's advice and, returning, cast the dinar down before the Jew. "Take your gold and give back the poor man's fish," he said, "Do you think that you can mock at the destitute in this way?" The Jew thought that the fisherman was having a joke, so he held out three dinars with a laugh; but Khalif said: "Enough said of this unpleasing jest, in Allah's name! Do you really think that I would sell my fish for such a trifle?"

The Jew then held out five dinars, exclaiming: "Take these for your fish and do not be greedy!" Khalif took the five dinars in his hand and went away contented. He looked at the gold with marvelling eyes, and cried: "Glory be to Allah! There is more in my hand today than in all the palace of the khalifat!" He had come to the limit of the market before he remembered the ape's words; at once he hastened back to the Jew and disdainfully threw the money at his feet. "What is the matter with you, Khalif, and what do you want? Do you want me to change the gold into silver for you?" But the other answered: "I do not want your gold or your silver; I want you to give back the poor man's fish."

The Jew grew angry at this, and called out: "I give you five dinars for a fish that is not worth one, and you are not satisfied! Are you mad? Tell me what you want for the thing?" "I wish neither silver nor gold," replied Khalif, "I will sell it cheap in exchange for a few words." When the Jew heard this mention of a few words, he thought that the fisherman meant the few words of the act of Islamic Faith and wished him to change his religion for the fish. His eyes rose to the top of his head in anger and indignation, his breathing stopped, and he cried, grinding his teeth: "O nail paring of the Mussulmans, do you wish to part me from my faith for a single fish, to make me abjure the law which my fathers followed?" He yelled to his servants: "O evil day! Fall on this pitch face and carefully beat his flesh to ribbons! On no account spare him!"

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundred-and-fifty-eighth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID :

THE SERVANTS FELL upon Khalif with their sticks and beat him till he fell to the bottom of the stairs. "Let him get up now," said the Jew; and at once the fisherman jumped to his feet as if he had felt nothing. "Now will you tell me the price to which you pretend for your fish?" asked Abu Saada, "I am ready to pay anything in reason, to be done with it; but, in making your demand, remember the unpleasant treatment which you have already undergone." "Have no fears for my skin, dear master," answered Khalif with a laugh, "in the matter of sticks I can stand more strokes than ten donkeys put together. I do not feel them." The Jew also laughed, and said kindly: "Come now, tell me what you want; and I swear, by the truth of my faith, that I will give it you." "I have already told it you," answered the fisherman, "I ask a few words in exchange for the fish. They have nothing to do with our act of Faith; for, as Allah lives, if you became a Mussulman, your conversion would be no advantage to Islam and no loss to the Jews; and, if you remain fixed in your impious error, your infidelity will be no loss to the Mussulmans and no advantage to the Jews. The few words which I ask are quite different. I wish you to rise up and say: 'Bear witness, O all you who are present in this market, that I consent to exchange my ape for the ape of Khalif the fisherman; that I barter my luck for his luck, and my fortune for his fortune.' "

"That is easy," said the Jew, and immediately got to his feet and proclaimed the required words. Then

he asked the fisherman if there were anything more that he could do and, when the other answered that there was not, bade him begone in peace. Khalif therefore took up his empty basket and his net, and returned to the river bed.

Trusting in the promise of the fair-eyed ape, he cast his net and drew it ashore with difficulty, filled with an abundance of every kind of fish. Immediately there passed a woman balancing a dish upon her head, who bought a fish for a dinar; then a slave came along who bought a second fish for a dinar; by the end of the day he had sold his catch for a hundred dinars. He triumphantly returned with his gold to the miserable lodging which he rented near the fish market and at once, as night was falling, fell into a great anxiety about his riches. Before lying down on his mat to sleep, he said to himself: "O Khalif, all in this quarter know that you are a poor man, an unhappy penniless fisherman; but now you have a hundred golden dinars, as they are called. Folk will get to know of this; the khalifat, Haroun Al-Rachid, will get to know of this, and one day, when he is short of money, will send by guards to say to me: 'I need some money and I hear that you have a hundred dinars. I am going to borrow them.' I will put on my most pitiful air and weep and answer: 'O Prince of Believers, I am a poor man, a nothing: how could I have such a fabulous sum? Whoever told you is a terrible liar; I have never had so much money.' Then, to extract my money and to learn its hiding place, he will hand me over to Ahmad-the-Moth, his chief of police, who will strip me naked and beat me until I give up my hundred dinars . . . The best way to prevent this loss is not to say anything; and the best way to be able to say nothing is to accustom my flesh to whipping, though,

Allah be praised, it is already passably hard. Now I must make it quite hard, or my native sensibility will weaken me under the blows and make me speak in spite of my soul."

As soon as he had thought things out in this way, Khalif began to put into execution a plan which his mind (being no wiser than the mind of a hashish eater) suggested to him.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundred-and-fifty-ninth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

HE STRIPPED HIMSELF naked and hung a leather cushion, which he had, to a nail in the wall; then, taking up a whip with a hundred-and-eighty lashes, he began to beat, with alternate strokes, his own leathery back and the leather of the cushion. At the same time he uttered loud cries, as if he were already in the presence of the chief of police. "Aie! Alas, alas!" he cried, "Aie! a terrible lie! Alas, alas! Aie! Wicked words! Oh, oh! How sensitive a skin! The liars! I am a poor man! Allah, Allah! A poor fisherman! I have no money! Aie, aie! None of the vain riches of this world! Yes, I have! No, I have not! Yes, I have! No, I have not!" And he continued his discipline in this way, at first dividing his strokes equally with the cushion, but later forgetting his own turn and giving the cushion two for one and then three and then four and then five for one.

The neighbours heard his cries and lashes sounding

through the night and they became anxious. "What has happened to the poor lad that he cries in this way?" they asked, "What are these blows showering upon him? Do you think that robbers have broken in and are beating him to death?" Then, as the yells and blows became more sonorous and frequent, they left their houses and ran to Khalif's lodging. Finding the door shut, they said: "The robbers must have got in by the other side, by the terrace." So they climbed on to the neighbouring terrace and from there to the terrace of Khalif's house, and let themselves down by the upper opening. They found him alone and utterly naked, lashing about with his whip, leaping from side to side on his legs, and protesting his innocence in a continuous babble.

"What is the matter, Khalif?" asked the astonished intruders, "Your cries and blows have set all the quarter in an uproar and are keeping us awake. We were very frightened." Instead of answering their questions, Khalif called out: "What do you all want? Am I not master of my own flesh? Can I not have a little peace to teach it blows? How should I know what the future has in store for me? Depart, good folk, and try the same exercise yourselves; for you are no more immune from exaction and outrage than myself." Then, without paying any attention to his visitors, the fisherman went on yelling under the blows, which fell heavily upon the cushion.

Seeing him so, the neighbours laughed so heartily that they fell over on their backsides; then they went their way.

Though in a little while Khalif wearied of his pursuit, he would not close his eyes all night for fear of robbers. Before setting out to fish on the morrow, he thought again of his hundred dinars, and said to him-

self: "If I leave them in my lodging they will surely be stolen; if I fasten them in my belt some robber will see the bulge and lie in wait for me and kill me for them. I must do something better than that." He thereupon tore his cloak in two and made a bag with the pieces, afterwards putting the gold in the bag and hanging it about his neck with a string. Then he took up his net, his basket, and his stick, and walked down to the river. Arrived at the bank, he cast his net into the water with the full strength of his arms; but the movement was so sudden and undisciplined that the bag of gold jumped from his neck and followed the net into the water, where it was dragged into the depths by the force of the current.

Khalif let go his net and, undressing in the twinkling of an eye, dived after his bag; but he could not find it. He dived again and again, and, at last, a hundred times; but the bag had disappeared and, when he walked up the bank to dress, his clothes had disappeared also. He beat his hands together, crying: "Ah, the vile thieves to steal my clothes! All this but proves the proverb: 'A camel-boy never achieves pilgrimage until he has buggered his camel.'"

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundred-and-sixtieth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

POOR KHALIF WRAPPED himself in his net, for it was the best covering that remained to him and, taking up his basket and stick, began to stride along the river

bank, dancing to right and left, to front and back, panting, reasonless, and raging, like a rutting camel or a rebel Ifrit escaped from his brass prison. So much for Khalif the fisherman.

Now we must consider the case of the Khalifat, Haroun Al-Rachid; for he is deeply concerned in our tale. There was, at that time, in Baghdad, a man named Ibn Al-Kirnas, who was jeweller and man of affairs to the khalifat. So important was he in the market that no sale took place in all Baghdad of rich fabrics, jewels, boys, or girls, which did not pass through his hands at some point or another. One day this Ibn Al-Kirnas was sitting in his shop when the chief broker led up to him a girl such as he had never before seen in that city: there was nothing stored in man's memory to equal the elegance of her slim perfection. Not only was she fair beyond all women, but she knew every science and art which can be known; she was an adept in poetry, singing, and dancing, and could play upon every harmonious instrument. Al-Kirnas bought her, without a moment's hesitation, for five thousand dinars and, when he had spent another thousand upon dressing her, took her into the presence of the khalifat. She passed the night with Al-Rachid so that he might be able to prove her talents for himself, and he found her expert in all things. Her name was Heart's-Life and she was brown and fresh of skin.

The Prince of Believers was enchanted with his new slave and, on the morrow, sent ten thousand dinars to Al-Kirnas. He loved the girl with so violent a passion and his heart lay so completely beneath her feet that, for her, he neglected the Lady Zobeida, his cousin, and cast aside all his favourites. He remained with her for a whole month, only leaving her chamber for the

Friday prayer and hastening back as soon as that was over. Thus it happened that the lords of the kingdom thought his infatuation too grave to be allowed to continue and carried their complaints to Giafar Al-Barmaki, the grand-wazir. Giafar promised to cure the khalifat and, for this purpose, waited for him upon the following Friday. He entered the mosque and spoke for a long while with the king concerning the passion of love and all its consequences. "As Allah lives, O Giafar," answered the khalifat, "I count for nothing in this matter. The fault is with my heart; for it stumbled into the nets of love and I cannot release it." "Prince of Believers," continued Giafar, "the girl Heart's-Life is now in your power, submissive to your orders, a slave among your slaves; and you should know that what the hand possesses the soul does not covet. I wish to show you a way of keeping your heart unwearied of this favourite: leave her from time to time, go hunting, or fishing, there are other nets besides those of love. These occupations would be better for you at present than an attention to the affairs of your kingdom; for those would weary you too much." "That is an excellent idea, Giafar," said the khalifat, "Let us go upon some excursion without delay." As soon as the prayers were over, each mounted his mule outside the mosque and led their escort through the gate of the city, in order to ride over the fields.

They rode hither and thither in the heat of the day and soon left their escort behind in the distraction of their conversation. It was not long before Al-Rachid felt the pangs of thirst and, looking round to see if there were any dwelling near, saw some object moving far off upon a hillock. "Can you see what that is, Giafar?" he asked: and the wazir replied: "O Com-

mander of the Faithful, I can see some vague thing on that knoll. Doubtless it is a gardener or planter of cucumbers. As there is certain to be water in his neighbourhood, I will ride and fetch you some." "My mule is faster than yours," answered Al-Rachid. "Wait here for our escort, while I ride forward myself. I will return as soon as I have drunken." So saying, the khalifat galloped off on his mule more swiftly than the wind of a tempest, or water falling from a rock, and, in the twinkling of an eye, had reached the hillock. There he saw a naked man wound with fishing nets and covered with sweat and dust, having red, staring eyes, and a horrible expression. This was Khalif the fisherman and he looked like one of those evil Jinn who wander in desert places.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundred-and-sixty-first Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

HAROUN WISHED THIS strange figure peace and Khalif answered with a curse and a flaming look. "Have you a drink of water to give me?" asked the khalifat; and Khalif answered: "Are you blind or mad? Do you not see that water flows behind this hill?" Haroun walked round the knoll and descended to the Tigris where he drank, flat on his belly, and then watered his mule. Returning to Khalif, he said: "What are you doing here, O man, and what is your profession?" "That question is more foolish than the one about the water," answered Khalif, "Do you

not see the instrument of my trade about my shoulders?" "Without doubt you are a fisherman," said the khalifat, glancing at the net about his shoulders, "But what have you done with your cloak, your shirt, and your kilt?" At these words, Khalif, who had lost exactly these things, did not doubt that the thief stood before him; therefore he leapt like a beam of light from the top of the hillock and seized the mule by the bridle, saying: "Give me back my clothes and stop this unseemly joke." "As Allah lives," answered Haroun, "I have not seen your clothes and do not understand what you are saying." Now, as all the world knows, Al-Rachid had fat swollen cheeks and a very small mouth; so, when Khalif looked at him more closely, he supposed him to be a clarinet player; and cried: "Will you give me back my clothes, you clarinet player, or would you rather dance to my stick and piss your drawers?"

"As Allah lives, I could not bear the half of a stroke from such a stick," murmured the khalifat, as he looked at the enormous cudgel which the fisherman lifted above his head. Rather than risk a trial, he took off his beautiful satin robe and offered it to Khalif, saying: "O man, take this robe in place of those things which you have lost." Khalif turned the robe about in every direction, and said: "O clarinet player, my clothes were worth ten times as much as this ugly ornamented garment." "That may be so," answered Al-Rachid, "but put it on for the time being, until I can find your own for you." Khalif put on the robe and found it too long; therefore he took the knife fastened to the handle of his fish basket, and cut off the lower third, which he rolled into a turban. The garment now reached only to his knees, but he preferred it so.

Khalif now turned to the khalifat, saying: "Allah upon you, O clarinet player, tell me how much your playing brings you in every month?" Not daring to vex his questioner, Al-Rachid replied: "My playing on the clarinet brings me in about ten dinars a month." Then said Khalif, in a tone of profound commiseration: "As Allah lives, I grieve for you, poor man. I can earn ten dinars in a single hour, just by casting out my net and pulling it in again; for I have an ape in the water who looks after my interests and drives the fish into my meshes. Would you like to enter my service, chubby cheeks? I will teach you the trade of a fisherman and give you five dinars a day as my assistant. Later, if you progress, I will take you into partnership. Also you will benefit by the protection of my stick in case your old master in the clarinet line makes any objection. I will smash him with a single blow." "I accept your offer," answered Al-Rachid, and Khalif continued: "Come down from your mule and fasten him, so that he can carry our fish to the market when they are caught. Now come quickly and take your first lesson."

Sighing in his soul, the khalifat cast despairing eyes about him and came down from the mule. He fastened the beast near by and kilted up such clothes as remained to him, tucking the tails of his shirt in below his belt. Then he took his stand by the fisherman, who said to him: "Hold this net by the ends, clarinet player, throw it over your arm in such a fashion, and cast it out above the water in such a fashion." Al-Rachid plucked up all the courage in his heart and cast the net in the manner directed; in a few moments he tried to draw it back, but it was so heavy that Khalif had to help him. As the two brought it slowly to land, Khalif cried to his assistant: "O clarinet of

my zebb, if I find the net torn or damaged by stones, I will bugger you. Also I will take your mule." Happily for Haroun, the net was intact and filled full with very beautiful fishes; otherwise the khalifat would certainly have had to entertain the fisherman's zebb and Allah alone knows how he would have come out of such an ordeal. For that particular thing was not negligible with Khalif. As there was no need to carry out his threat, the fisherman cried: "O clarinet, you are very ugly and your face is exactly like my bum; but, as Allah lives, if you pay attention to your new trade, you will become no ordinary fisherman."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundred-and-sixty-second Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

"... IN THE MEANWHILE, mount your mule and ride to the market for two large baskets to hold the surplus of this prodigious catch. I will stay here and look after the fish. Do not bother about anything else, for I have the scales and weights with me, and all the other necessities of the retail trade. When we reach the fish market you will only have to hold the scales and take the money. Take care not to loiter, or your buttocks and my stick shall cry, 'Well met!'" "I hear and I obey," answered the khalifat; and, unfastening his mule, made off at full gallop, laughing as if his heart would break. When Giafar saw him accoutred in so strange a fashion, he lifted his arms to the sky, crying: "O Commander of the Faithful, without

doubt you have found some fair garden on the way and have lain down in it and rolled upon the grass." The khalifat laughed more heartily than ever and the other Barmecides of the escort, who were relations of Giafar, kissed the earth between the king's hands, saying: "O Prince of Believers, may Allah drive away your care and establish your joy for ever! Why have you been so long parted from us, when you left only for a mouthful of water?"

Then said the khalifat: "I chanced on a prodigious adventure, the most delightful of my life." He told them of his meeting with Khalif the fisherman and how he had given his embroidered satin robe to replace the stolen garments. "By Allah," cried Giafar, "when I saw you depart alone, so richly clad, I had a presentiment that something like this would happen to you. But there is no great harm done, for I can go at once and buy back the robe from the fisherman." The khalifat laughed louder than ever, and answered: "You should have thought of that earlier, Giafar, the good fellow has already cut away a third of it for a turban . . . But I tell you, Giafar, my one experience of fishing has been enough; I shall not try that form of exercise again. Also I could never hope to equal my first effort; I caught a miraculous abundance and my master is looking after them, and waits for me to return with certain baskets." "O Prince of Believers, shall I beat up purchasers for you?" asked Giafar; and Haroun cried: "By the pure virtue of my ancestors, I promise a dinar a fish to all who will run and buy them from my master, Khalif."

Then cried Giafar to the escort: "Run to the bank and try to obtain fish for the Prince of Believers." At once all the men of the escort ran in the direction which Giafar indicated and surrounded Khalif, as

sparrow-hawks surround their prey. They seized on the fish piled before him, quarrelling over each, in spite of the stick with which Khalif menaced them. In the end the poor fisherman was overcome by numbers, and cried out: "After all, these fish are not the fish of Paradise!" By a hearty use of his stick he was able to save the two best fishes from the pillage and, holding one in each hand, he jumped into the water. This he did because he thought that his assailants were brigands or highway cutters. Wading in deep, he lifted his hands, with a fish in each, and cried: "O Allah, I pray by the virtue of these heavenly fish, that my assistant, the clarinet player, be not long in coming!"

While he was praying, a negro of the escort, who had been made late by his horse stopping on the road to piss, reached the bank and found the fish all gone. When he spied Khalif holding up his fish in the water, he cried to him: "Come here, O fisherman." But Khalif answered: "Begone, you zebb-swallower!" These words so annoyed the negro that, lifting his lance, he aimed it at Khalif, saying: "Either you will come here and sell those fish or I will send my lance through your thigh." "Do not throw, you rascal," answered Khalif, "I would rather give you the fish than lose my life." He waded out of the water and threw the fish down in front of the negro with a gesture of high disdain. After picking them up and wrapping them in a richly embroidered handkerchief, the man felt in his pocket for money. Finding it empty, he said to Khalif: "You have no luck, O fisherman, for I have not a single dirham in my pocket. But if you will come to the palace tomorrow and ask for Sandal, the black eunuch, you will find a generous welcome and a price for your fish which will send you re-

joicing upon your way." Not daring to answer back, Khalif cast at the eunuch one glance which said more than a thousand insults or a thousand threats of bug-gery, or a thousand promises to mount his mother or his sister, and made off in the direction of Baghdad. As he went he beat his hands together and said in a bitter voice of irony: "Well today, right from the beginning, has been the most blessed in all my life. That is evident." He went past the walls of the city and came to the entrance of the market.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundred-and-sixty-third Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

SEEING KHALIF COME carrying his net and stick and basket as usual, and yet gowned and turbaned with a robe worth fully a thousand dinars, the shop-keepers joined in a procession behind him to see if they could find out the meaning of this thing. As they were passing the shop of the khalifat's tailor, the man recognised the robe which he had but lately sent home to the Commander of the Faithful. "How did you come by that robe, O Khalif?" he cried out; but Khalif eyed him askance, and answered: "What is that to you, shit-face? . . . Yet, if you must know, it was given to me by my apprentice, to whom I am teaching the trade. If he had not given it to me I would have cut his hand off for robbing me of all my clothes."

The tailor understood from this answer that the khalifat must have met the fisherman on his excursion

and played some joke upon him. Therefore he allowed Khalif to continue on his way in peace. The fisherman soon came to his own house, where we will find him again tomorrow.

Now it is time to find out what was happening at the palace while the khalifat was away. Well, well, I can assure you that some very serious things were happening.

We know that the khalifat had only left his palace to take a little air in the fields with Giafar and to distract his overpowering passion for Heart's-Life. The madness which this slave inspired did not torture the khalifat only; his cousin and queen, Zobeida, had not been able to eat, drink, or sleep since the girl had entered the palace, because her soul was filled full to bursting with that jealousy which is common to women. She only waited for an occasion when the khalifat should be absent to avenge the continuous affront which she suffered every hour of the day in the eyes of her servants. So, when she heard that her lord had gone out to ride, she prepared a sumptuous feast in her apartments, with drinks of every kind and porcelain plates filled with conserve and pastry. Then she sent, with great ceremony, to invite Heart's-Life, causing the slaves to say to her: "Our mistress, Zobeida, daughter of Kassim, wife of the khalifat, invites you to a feast which she is giving in your honour. To-day she has taken medicine and, to obtain the best results from it, it is necessary for her heart to rejoice and her spirit to remain calm. Knowing of no better rest or greater joy than to see you and hear your wonderful singing, of which the khalifat has spoken with such admiration, she begs that you will not refuse her." Heart's-Life made answer: "My hearing and obedience are all for Allah and for the Lady Zobeida,

my mistress." She rose, not knowing what things the mysterious hands of Destiny held in store for her, and, taking her instruments of music, accompanied the chief-eunuch to Zobeida's apartments.

When she came into the queen's presence, she kissed the earth many times between her hands and then said in a voice of infinite sweetness: "Peace be upon the lifted curtain and sublime veil of this harem, on the descendant of the Prophet, on the heiress to the virtue of the Abbassides! May Allah draw out the joy of our mistress even as long as night succeeds to day!" Having made this compliment, she modestly retired among the other women.

Zobeida, who lay stretched upon a vast diwan of velvet, lifted slow eyes to the favourite and looked at her fixedly.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundred-and-sixty-fourth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

ZOBEIDA WAS TAKEN aback by the girl's beauty; for the child had hair of night, cheeks like the red hearts of roses, pomegranates for breasts, shining eyes and languid lids, a bright brow and a face compact of moonlight. The sun rose in the morning from her forehead and the shadows crept at night out of her hair; without her breath there would have been no musk; lacking her, the flowers would never have known their perfume; the moon borrowed from her; branches would never have swayed in the wind without the

example of her waist, nor could the stars have shone if they had not learnt their shining from her eyes; bows would never have been stretched in fight to perfect curves, save in imitation of her eyebrows; the coral of the sea had heard of her lips and blushed because of them. When she was angry, her lovers fell dead all along the earth; and when she recovered her temper, their lives came back to them. Her young eye knew more than the oldest sorcerer, for it could magic the two worlds with a single spell. She was the miracle and honour of her time; she was a glory to Him who fashioned her.

When Zobeida had detailed these perfections in her own mind, she said: "Easy and friendly welcome, O Heart's-Life. I pray you sit down and pass our time with the beauty of your art." "I hear and I obey," answered the girl; she sat down and took in her hand a cunningly constructed tambourine. If you had been there you would have remembered these lines of the poet:

*The drum of my breast
Answers your reckless tambourine;
Your fingers hurry over—which?
Be naked, tambourine-player,
Dance on my heart's floor.*

After making this instrument prettily resound, she sang these verses to its accompaniment:

*The birds said to the bird within my breast,
To the poor wounded song-bird there at rest;
"Oh, fly men,
Callous hordes."
But I: "O heart, do what you can for men*

*And flirt your feathers like a fan for men,
For hymen,
Your reward."*

She sang this song so wonderfully that the birds paused in their flight across the sky, and the palace danced with all its walls. Then she put aside the tambourine and, taking up a rose-wood flute, bent her lips and fingers to it. If you had been there you would have remembered these lines of the poet:

*The rose-wood flute is dead today,
But when he feels your scarlet lips
The singing soul of laughter slips
Into his tube and he is gay.*

*Blow in my heart, then, and behold
My seven wounds are seven vents
And I am young. At all events,
The rose-wood flute is dead and old.*

When she had played an air upon the flute, she set it aside and, taking up a skilfully constructed lute, tuned the strings of it. She put it to her bosom, leaning over it with the tenderness of a mother nursing her child; and if you had seen her, you would have recalled the words of the poet:

*Player upon the Persian lute, your hands
Calm and exalt and follow your commands,
Even as a doctor, feeling with his skill,
Makes the hot life-blood hasten or be still.
Player upon the Persian lute, your fine
And foreign fingers the sweet cords combine
Until each hears his native song, and each
Who does not know, yet understands your speech.*

She preluded in fourteen different modes and then sang a song which ravished those who heard it into a paradise of delight.

After this, she rose in her supple grace and danced before Zobeida; and, after her dance, executed feats of skill and sleight-of-hand. This she did with such art and with so light a touch that Zobeida, in spite of her jealousy and desire for vengeance, well-nigh fell in love with her and declared her passion. Even as she checked this feeling, she said in her soul: "My cousin, Al-Rachid, is hardly to blame!"

At this point, Shahrazadé saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundred-and-sixty-fifth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

ZOBEIDA ALLOWED her hatred to overcome her admiration, and commanded the slaves to serve the feast. Yet her sudden compassion did not altogether desert her and, instead of poisoning her rival as she had intended, she contented herself with having a very strong dose of soporific banj mingled with the pastries which were given to Heart's-Life. As soon as the favourite carried a morsel of one of these to her lips, she fell head over heels and dropped into the blackness of a swoon. Zobeida feigned great grief at this and ordered the slaves to carry her victim into a secret chamber; then she spread news of the girl's death, saying that she had been stifled by eating too fast; and caused a solemn funeral and mock burial to take place. Lastly she hastened the construction

of a sumptuous tomb in the garden of the palace.

When the khalifat returned after his adventure with the fisherman, his first care was to ask news of his beloved from the eunuchs; but the eunuchs, whom Zobeida had threatened with the gallows if they did not obey her, answered mournfully: "Alas, alas, my lord! May Allah prolong your days and add to your term the missing years of our mistress, Heart's-Life. O Commander of the Faithful, your absence wrought such despairing grief in her, that she could not support the commotion of it, and suddenly death took her. She is now in the peace of our God."

The khalifat began to run through the palace like a madman, stopping his ears and crying aloud for his beloved to all who met him. Those who were in his way threw themselves flat on their bellies or hid behind colonnades. He came swiftly to the garden where the false tomb stood and stretched out his arms over it; leaning his forehead to the marble and weeping bitterly, he cried:

They say the grave is cold,

But I have put all warmth to sleep in you.

They say the grave is old,

But I have given youth to you to keep in you.

They say the grave is lack,

But I have surfeited too soon in you.

They say the grave is black,

But I see rose flowers and a small white moon in you.

For an hour he sobbed out his grief upon the tomb and then shut himself in his own apartments, refusing the consolations of his wife and friends.

As soon as she saw that her ruse had been successful, Zobeida caused the drugged favourite to be placed in

a chest which had been used for garments, and ordered two of her confidential slaves to carry the box to the market and sell it to the first purchaser, on condition that the lid was not raised. So much for all of them.

When Khalif the fisherman woke next morning, his first thought was of the black eunuch who had not paid him for his two fish. "The best thing I can do," he said to himself, "is to go to the palace and ask for that fellow Sandal, that son of a wide-nostrilled bitch. If he does not fulfil his promise, as Allah lives, I will bugger him." With that he made his way to the palace. When he got there he found the place upside down and, at the very door, he saw Sandal, the black eunuch, sitting in the middle of a respectful group of other black eunuchs, talking and gesticulating. As Khalif advanced towards these people a young mameluke would have barred his passage, so he pushed him out of the way, crying: "Away, you son of a pimp!" Sandal turned his head at this cry and, recognising the fisherman, laughed and told him to draw near. Khalif advanced, saying: "As Allah lives, I would have recognised you among a thousand, my blond, my little tulip." The eunuch laughed with all his lungs, and answered kindly: "Sit down for a little while, O Khalif, O master. I will pay you in a moment." He had just put his hand in his pocket for the money when a cry announced the approach of Giafar, the grand-wazir, who had just left the khalifat.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundred-and-sixty-sixth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THE EUNUCHS, SLAVES, and mamelukes ranged themselves in two lines; and Sandal, receiving a sign from the wazir, left the fisherman and hurried up to Giafar. The two fell into a long conversation, walking up and down the hall.

But Khalif, seeing that the eunuch did not come back to him, thought that this was a trick to escape payment, especially as the eunuch seemed to have forgotten him and took no notice of him at all. He therefore began to fidget and sign to the eunuch to return; then, when the other paid no attention, he cried: "My lord Tulip, give me my due and let me go." Sandal was thrown into great confusion by this address, delivered in Giafar's presence, and, instead of answering, began to talk with more and more animation, to distract the wazir's attention. He might have spared his pains, for Khalif came near and cried in a terrible voice and with vast gestures: "Allah confound the faithless, you insolvent ruffian, Allah confound the oppressors of the poor!" Then, changing his voice to one of irony, he continued: "I put myself under your protection, O my lord Hollow-belly; I beg you to pay me what you owe and let me go my way." This time Giafar heard, but did not understand. Therefore he turned to the confused eunuch, and asked: "What is the matter with that poor man? Who has been cheating him?" "My lord, do you not know the man?" said Sandal; but the wazir replied: "As Allah lives, how should I know him

since I have never seen him before?" "But, my lord," went on the unhappy eunuch, "this is the very fisherman whose fish we brought to the khalifat yesterday. I promised him money for his two last fish and he has come today to be paid. I was about to satisfy him when I had to come to you. That is why the impatient lad talks in this way."

The wazir Giafar smiled sweetly, and said: "O chief of the eunuchs, do you speak thus disrespectfully of the master of the emir's self? Poor Sandal, what will the khalifat say when he learns that you have not honoured Khalif the fisherman, his instructor and fellow? . . . Do not let him go, for his coming is most fortunate. The khalifat mourns in despair for the death of his favourite and I have tried without success all ordinary ways of distracting him, but I think that we can cheer him up with the help of Khalif. Keep him here while I go and sound the feelings of the khalifat." "Do as you judge propitious, my lord," answered Sandal. "May Allah preserve you for ever as the stay, the pillar, the cornerstone of the empire and dynasty! May He shed the shadow of His protection upon you and upon it! May the branch, the trunk, and the root remain unwithered throughout the ages!" So saying, he hastened to join Khalif, while Giafar departed to the apartments of Al-Rachid. "So there you are, hollow-belly!" cried the fisherman and then, when he heard the eunuch order the mameluke to keep him, he yelled at the top of his voice: "Keep him? Keep him? There is not much chance of my going before I am paid. I come here for my just due, O tulip of my zebb, and then they imprison me because I am behind with my taxes!" So much for him.

Giafar went gently in and found the khalifat bent

double, his head between his hands and his breast shaken by sobs. He heard him saying softly:

*Child, who went gathering the flowers of death,
My heart's not I, I cannot teach my heart;
It cries when I forget.
It has not learnt my art
To forget lips when scented with their breath
Or the red cup, when I am drunken yet.*

Giafar bowed low, and said: "Peace be upon you, O Commander of the Faithful, O Defender of the honour of Allah, O descendant of the uncle of the Prophet! May the prayer and peace of Allah be upon him and upon all his seed for ever!"

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundred-and-sixty-seventh Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THE KHALIFAT LIFTED tear-dimmed eyes and a haggard face to Giafar, then he answered: "The peace and mercy and blessing of Allah be upon you!" "Does the Prince of Believers permit his slave to speak, or does he forbid?" asked the wazir; and Al-Rachid asked in his turn: "Since when has the lord and head of all my wazirs needed to ask leave to speak?" Then said Giafar: "My king, when I left you just now I met at the door of the palace, all among the eunuchs, your master and professor, Khalif

the fisherman. He has much cause of complaint against you. I heard him say: 'Glory be to Allah, I do not understand what has happened. I taught him the art of fishing and he showed no gratitude; also he went to fetch two baskets and never came back. Is that good fellowship, or good apprenticeship? Is that how masters of the craft are paid?' I hasten to tell you of this, O Prince of Believers, so that, if you still wish to go into partnership with him, you can do so; and, if you do not, you can tell him that your joint labours are over and that he must look for another companion."

In spite of the sobs which stifled him, the khalifat first smiled and then roared with laughter. Quite suddenly he felt his heart grow lighter, and said: "By my life, tell me the truth, Giafar. Is the fisherman Khalif really in the palace?" "I swear by your life that he is here in flesh and blood," answered Giafar. Then said Haroun: "As Allah lives, I must do justice upon him today and let him have his due. If Allah wishes to send him pains and penalties through me, it must be so; if he wishes to send him rank and fortune, it must be so." So saying, the khalifat took a large sheet of paper and, while he was cutting it into little equal pieces, continued: "You must first write, on twenty of these tickets, sums of money ranging from one dinar to a thousand dinars and the names of the ranks of my kingdom, from the dignity of khalifat, emir, wazir, and chamberlain, down to the most degraded offices of the palace; then on twenty other tickets you must write the names of punishments and tortures, from simple beating up to the gallows and a shameful death." Giafar thereupon took pen and wrote upon the tickets in his own hand such inscriptions as these: *A thousand dinars, to be a cham-*

berlain, emirship, khalifat's dignity, sentence of death, imprisonment, the stick, and the like. Then he folded all the tickets into the same shape and, casting them into a little gold basin, gave the basin to the khalifat, who said: "I swear by my sacred ancestors, by my royal line which stretches back to Akil, that I will order Khalif the fisherman to draw one of these tickets and reward him according to its writing. Should it be khalifat's dignity, I will cheerfully abdicate in his favour; should it be hanging or mutilation or gelding, that also will I cheerfully give him. Let him be brought to me at once!"

Said Giafar to himself: "There is no power or might save in Allah! It is quite possible that this poor fellow will draw a bad ticket and thus I shall be unwillingly the cause of his death. The khalifat has sworn and nothing will change him. Now I am committed to fetching the unfortunate man. Be it as Allah wills!" He then went out from the khalifat and found the fisherman; but when he would have taken him by the hand and led him in, Khalif, who had not ceased to fidget and complain and repent of his coming, thought that he had lost his wits, and cried: "What a fool I was to listen to this ill-omened tulip, this blobber-lipped son of a bitch, this hollow-belly!" But Giafar bade him follow and dragged him along, pressed close by a crowd of slaves and boys, through seven vast vestibules and right to the entrance of the khalifat's apartments. "Be careful, Khalif," he said, "you are about to enter the presence of the Prince of Believers, the Defender of the Faith." Drawing aside a large curtain, he pushed the fisherman into the reception hall, where Haroun Al-Rachid sat throned among his emirs; but Khalif, who did not understand what he saw, was in no way

disconcerted. After examining the khalifat carefully, he went up to him with a bellow of laughter, and said: "So there you are, clarinet. Do you think that you behaved well to leave me in the lurch with all the fish, when I had taught you the art and sent you to fetch baskets? I was left defenceless and at the mercy of a flock of eunuchs, who came round me like vultures and stole all the fish. I should have got a hundred dinars for them. And I would not be surprised if you were the cause of my being kept here by all these people. . . . Now tell me, clarinet, who has imprisoned you and fastened you to that chair?"

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundred-and-sixty-eighth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THE KHALIFAT SMILED and held out the gold bowl, saying: "Draw near, Khalif, and take one of these tickets." But Khalif, being unable to contain his mirth, cried out: "What, has little clarinet given up music and become an astrologer? Yesterday it was fishing. Believe me, clarinet, all this will not take you very far; the more trades the less profit. Let the astrology business be and either return to your clarinet or let me go on teaching you." He would have continued in this strain had not Giafar approached him, saying: "Enough of that! Draw one of these tickets as the Commander of the Faithful has bidden you."

He pushed him towards the throne and Khalif, with a backward blow of his elbow, leaned cursing over the basin and, plunging his hand in heavily, pulled out a handful of the tickets. Giafar bade him put these back and take only one; so the fisherman, elbowing the wazir out of the way again, took a single ticket, saying: "I shall never again employ a fat-faced clarinet player, or an astrologer for that matter." So saying, he unfolded the ticket and handed it upside down to the khalifat: "Tell me my horoscope, clarinet," he begged, "do not hide anything from me!" The khalifat passed the ticket to Giafar, bidding him read out the writing in a loud voice; so Giafar raised his arms and cried: "There is no power or might save in Allah! There is written upon this ticket: *a hundred blows of the stick.*"

"Let justice be done," said the khalifat; and, at once, Masrur seized the protesting fisherman and gave him a hundred heavy blows with the stick; whereat Khalif, though he did not feel the least pain, yelled lamentably and heaped a thousand curses on the clarinet player. Haroun laughed immoderately; but Khalif, leaping to his feet as if nothing had happened, called out: "Allah confound your joke, you silly bloat-face; do you think that a stick passes for wit among men of taste?" The soft-hearted Giafar then turned to the khalifat, saying: "Let him draw another ticket; perhaps there is a better fate in store for him. You would not wish your old fishing master to depart thirsting from the river of your liberality?" "You are very imprudent, Giafar," answered Al-Rachid, "Kings may not break their word; perhaps the fisherman might come to be hanged if he took a second chance. His death would be at your door." But Giafar answered: "By Allah, death is better

than life when a man is so unfortunate!" "So be it," agreed Haroun, "Let him draw another ticket." But Khalif cried: "Let Allah reward your generosity, O clarinet of my bum! Is there no one else in all Baghdad to join you in this game?" "Take another ticket and Allah will choose it for you," said Giafar.

Khalif plunged his hand again into the basin and drew out a ticket, which Giafar opened and read. "Well," said the khalifat, "Why do you not announce the reward?" "O Prince of Believers," replied the wazir, "there is nothing written on this ticket; it is a blank one." Then said the khalifat: "I was right; there is no fortune waiting for him with us. Tell him to be gone, for I have seen enough of him." But Giafar ventured to insist that Khalif should have a third chance and Al-Rachid consented to a third but no more. Then said Giafar to the fisherman: "Poor man, take your third and last ticket."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundred-and-sixty-ninth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

KHALIF DREW AGAIN and Giafar, taking the ticket, announced: *one dinar*. "Curses upon you, ill-omened clarinet; a dinar for a hundred strokes!" cried the wrathful fisherman, "May Allah give you the like on the Day of Judgment." The khalifat laughed with all his heart and Giafar, who had succeeded at last in distracting his master from his sorrow, took Khalif by the hand and led him from the hall.

As the unfortunate fisherman was leaving the palace, the eunuch Sandal called him, saying: "Come here, and let us share in the generosity of the khalifat." "You want to share, do you, pitch-face?" answered Khalif, "Your black hide is welcome to half of my beating; in the meanwhile, until the devil gives it to you in hell, you can have the dinar which your master gave me, that nasty scurvy little clarinet!" So saying he threw the dinar in the eunuch's face and would have gone out through the door, but Sandal ran after him and pressed a purse of a hundred dinars into his hand, saying: "This is for the fish. Now go in peace." Khalif rejoiced exceedingly; he pressed the purse to his bosom with one hand and picked up the rejected dinar with the other; then he went on his way, puffed out with glory and delight.

When Allah has decreed a thing, He brings it to pass, and He had made a decree concerning this Khalif. Thus it was that the fisherman, while passing through the slave market, was attracted by a crowd and, urged by curiosity, elbowed his way forward among the rich and poor with considerable vigour. When the people recognised him, they cried to each other: "Make way for this rich lord, he is going to buy the market! Make way for Khalif, the sublime master of buggers!" The fisherman was not in the least dashed by these remarks, for he felt sustained by the dinars in his belt. Pushing forward, he saw an old man sitting with a chest in front of him and heard him crying in a loud voice: "O rich merchants, O noble citizens of our city, who will risk his money at cent per cent and buy this chest with a speculative contents? It comes from the harem of Zobeida, queen of the Commander of the Faithful! Allah will bless the highest bidder!" A general silence answered this ap-

peal, for the merchants feared some trick. At last, with many apologies, one man offered twenty dinars, another raised the bid to fifty, and soon the price of the chest stood at a hundred dinars. Then cried the auctioneer: "Going at a hundred dinars, a hundred dinars, to the last bidder." But Khalif lifted up his voice, and cried: "A hundred and one!"

At this the merchants, who imagined that he had about as much money as a beaten carpet, began to laugh; but Khalif undid his belt, furiously repeating: "A hundred and one." "As Allah lives, the chest belongs to him," said the auctioneer, "I sell it to him only . . . Take your chest and may Allah bless the bargain." So Khalif emptied all his money into the man's hand and the chest became his lawful property.

At once all the porters of the market hurled themselves on the chest, fighting as to who should carry it, which did not suit the unfortunate Khalif at all, since he had not a penny left to buy an onion. Yet the porters continued to fight, snatching the chest one from the other, until the merchants intervened, and said that Zurayk had got there first. So, in spite of Khalif's protestations, they drove away the other porters and lifted the chest on to Zurayk's back, telling him to follow his master. This the porter did.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundred-and-seventieth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

AS THEY WENT along, Khalif said to himself: "I have neither gold, silver, nor copper; I have not the

smell of a coin. How am I going to pay this wretched porter? I do not want the fellow; for that matter, I do not want the chest. I have no idea what possessed me to buy it. I suppose it was written in my destiny. In the meanwhile, I think I know how to deal with the porter; I will make him run up and down and lose his way until he is worn out and refuses of his own accord to go any further. Then I will refuse to pay, and carry the chest myself."

At once he put this plan into execution: he walked from one street into another and from one square into another, and turned the porter about and about over all the city, from noon till sunset; and at last the man grumbled and asked where the house was. "As Allah lives," answered Khalif, "yesterday I knew very well where it was. Today I have quite forgotten. We are looking for it." "Give me my hire and take the chest," said the porter, but Khalif replied: "Wait a bit longer, go slowly, give me time to collect my memory and reflect about the position of my house." A little later, when the porter began grumbling between his teeth again, Khalif said to him: "O Zurayk, I have no money at all with me; my money is all at the house."

The porter halted, not being able to go any further, and was about to set down his burden when one of Khalif's friends passed and tapped him on the shoulder, saying: "Is that you, Khalif? What are you doing so far from your house? What is this man carrying for you?" The fisherman was put quite out of countenance; but Zurayk turned to the passenger, asking: "O uncle, where is Khalif's house?" "That is a strange question," answered the man, "his house is at the other end of Baghdad, in the ruined khan

near the fish market." Then he went laughing upon his way, and Zurayk cried to Khalif: "Get on with you, you cheat." He made the fisherman walk before him, right to the ruined khan by the fish market, and did not cease to curse and reproach him by the way. "May Allah cut off your daily bread, O evil face!" he said, "How many times have we not already passed your wretched house! Come on now, help me to set the thing down. I would like to see you shut up in it for ever." Khalif helped him down with the chest and then Zurayk wiped the big drops of sweat from his forehead with the back of his hand, saying: "Now let us see the greatness of your soul and the generosity of your hand. Hasten to pay me, for I would depart." "Certainly, old companion, certainly. Shall I bring you gold or silver?" asked Khalif; and the man answered more politely: "You know, better than I do, what is fitting."

Khalif left the porter at the door and entered his lodging; in a moment he returned with a most terrible whip in his hand: its forty lashes were clouted with sharp nails, one blow of it would have stunned a camel. Whirling the whip above his head, he threw himself upon the porter and beat him so heartily over the back that the poor fellow fled screaming, his hands pawing the air, and disappeared round the corner of the street.

Having thus got rid of the porter (who, we must remember, had insisted on carrying the chest when he was not wanted), Khalif began to drag it indoors himself; but he made so much noise that the neighbours gathered together about him and, noticing both the chest and the satin robe, asked him where he had got these things. "They were given me

by an apprentice lad of mine, a clarinet player who calls himself Haroun Al-Rachid," answered the fisherman.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundred-and-seventy-first Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

AT THESE WORDS the neighbours were seized with fear, and said: "If anyone hears this madman he will be taken up by the police and hanged. Our khan will be destroyed and perhaps we shall be hung at the gate of it, or terribly beaten." Therefore they bade Khalif be silent and, to be sooner quit of him, helped him carry the chest into his lodging and banged the door upon him.

Khalif's house was so small that the chest entirely filled it, just as if the former had been made to hold the latter; so Khalif was obliged to lie down on the chest to pass the night. While he was thinking over the events of the day, he suddenly asked himself why he should not open the chest and see the contents. He rose and tried to open the lid; but it was securely fastened down. "Fool that I was to buy a chest that I cannot even open!" he cried, and tried again to break the chains of the lock. At last he determined to wait for the morrow and, stretching himself out again on the lid, was soon snoring loudly.

In an hour he leapt up broad awake, in an access of terror, and struck his head against the ceiling. He

had felt something move inside the box! Sleep and judgment fled from his brain at the same moment, and he cried: "There is a Jinni inside! Praise be to Allah that I could not open the lid! If I had freed him in the dark, what would have happened? This is not one of my lucky days." Just then the noise in the chest redoubled and he could distinguish a kind of groaning; therefore he searched feverishly for a lamp, with chattering teeth, barking his knuckles against the wall and quite forgetting that he was too poor to own such a thing. "This is terrible, terrible!" he cried, as he sprang through the door into the street. With fear at his heels he rushed through the night, yelling: "Help, help! O neighbours, O neighbours, help!" The people of the khan, who were already fast asleep, woke up in considerable emotion and showed themselves, while half-veiled women peered from the doors. They all asked him what had happened, and he replied: "Give me a lamp, for pity's sake! The Jinn have come to visit me!" At this the neighbours laughed, but one of them gave him a lamp. The light reassured him and he returned to his house; but as he was leaning over the chest, a voice from within said: "Where am I? Where am I?" Khalif again rushed like a madman into the street, crying: "Help! Help!" When the neighbours called out to know what was the matter, he shouted: "Good people, the Jinni is talking in the box! He is asking where he is." The neighbours laughed again, and said: "Tell him he is in hell, you fool. Are we never going to get any sleep? You are a nuisance to the whole quarter. If you are not quiet, we will come down and break your bones." Despairing of help from his neighbours, Khalif determined to go back once more to the house, although

he was well-nigh dead from fear. He took up a large stone and, summoning all his courage, broke the lock of the chest and pulled back the lid.

Inside he saw a girl as beautiful as the houris and all shining in the little light with diamonds. She lay languishing with half-closed lids, deeply breathing the air of freedom, and gradually throwing off the vapours of the drug. She lay there, pale and handsome and desirable.

The fisherman, who had never in his life seen even common beauty, knelt before her, saying: "In Allah's name, who are you, my mistress?"

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundred-and-seventy-second Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

SHE OPENED DARK eyes under curved lids, saying: "Where are Jasmin and Jonquil?" These were the names of her two little slaves, but Khalif thought that she was asking for jasmins and jonquils, so he answered: "Dear mistress, for the moment, I only have a few flowers of dried henna." Hearing this answer, the girl came completely to her senses, and, opening her eyes wide, asked: "Who are you? And where am I?" This question was made in a voice suaver than sugar, accompanied by a delicious movement of the hands, and Khalif, who had somewhere deep within him a most sensitive soul, was moved in the extreme, and answered: "O mistress, O true beauty,

I am Khalif the fisherman; and you are in my house." "I am not at the palace then?" she asked; and he replied: "You are not. You are in my house. But that is now a palace. You have become my slave by fair buying and selling in the market, for I paid a hundred and one dinars for you with your box thrown in. In fact, I did not know you were inside until you frightened me very much by moving. I think my star is rising into happy spaces, though it used to be so low and dim." Heart's-Life smiled, and said: "You bought me without seeing me, O Khalif?" "Without even knowing you were there," he answered. At once Heart's-Life understood Zobeida's plot and made the fisherman tell her the whole story of that day. They talked together until the morning, and then the woman said: "O Khalif, have you got nothing to eat? I am very hungry." "I have nothing to eat or drink; nothing at all," he answered, "For two days food has not passed my lips." "Have you money?" she asked, and he said: "Money? Saving your presence, this cursed chest has run away with my last coin. I am hard aground." The girl laughed musically at this and begged Khalif to go forth and ask food from the neighbours.

The fisherman went out into the morning silence of the khan and began to cry at the top of his voice: "O neighbours, come to my help! The Jinni in the box wants something to eat! Give me some food!" The neighbours, who had learnt to dread his voice and also sincerely pitied him because of his poverty, threw down food to him; half of yesterday's loaf from one house, a bit of cheese from another, a cucumber, a radish, and so on. He gathered up these things in the folds of his lifted garment and, return-

ing to the house, gave them to the girl. He prayed her to eat, but she said with a laugh: "How can I eat when I have no little jar or pitcher of water? This food would stick in my throat and I should die." "Allah protect you from such a misfortune, O perfection of beauty!" said Khalif, "I will bring you, not a pitcher, but a whole waterskin." So saying, he ran out again into the courtyard of the khan and bellowed at the top of the compass of his deep chest: "O neighbours, O good neighbours!" Angry voices cursed him from all sides and asked what he wanted now. "The Jinni in the box needs some water," he answered. Then the neighbours came down: one carrying a cup, one a pitcher, one a pipkin, and one a jar; and he took all these things, carrying one in each hand, one beneath each arm, and balancing one on his head. He returned to Heart's-Life, saying: "I bring you your desire. Do you wish for anything else?" "No," she answered, "the gifts of Allah are great enough." "Then, dear mistress," said he, "speak more of your sweet words to me and tell me the story of your adventure."

Heart's-Life looked at Khalif with a smile, and thus began: "My story can be told in two words: rival's jealousy. Zobeida, queen of the khalifat, Haroun Al-Rachid, imprisoned me in this chest from which your happy destiny has saved me. I am Heart's-Life, favourite of the Commander of the Faithful. Your fortune is certainly made." Then said Khalif: "But is this Haroun Al-Rachid the man I taught how to fish? Is he that scarecrow who sat on a big chair in the palace?" "You describe him exactly," she answered; and he continued: "As Allah lives, I have never in all my life met such an ugly clarinet player or a greater rascal. First he

robbed me, the puff-faced little scoundrel, and then he gave me a dinar for a hundred strokes with the stick. If ever I meet him again . . .” Here Heart’s-Life bade him be silent, saying: “You must leave this unpleasant form of language behind you in the new situation to which fate is calling you. You must open the eyes of your soul, you must cultivate politeness and good manners. If you pass the scraper of gallantry over your skin, you will become a polished citizen of high degree, a personage of mark because of his delicacy.”

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundred-and-seventy-third Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

AT THESE WORDS, Khalif felt a sudden transformation take place within him: the eyes of his soul opened, his understanding of many things enlarged, and his intelligence refined. All this was for his good. How true it is that fine spirits influence grosser spirits! In a minute of time Khalif the fisherman, an insensate and brutal man, was changed by the gentle words of the girl into an exquisite citizen, well-mannered and strangely eloquent.

When Heart’s-Life had carefully taught him how to bear himself if he were called again into the presence of the khalifat, he exclaimed: “Be it upon my head and before my eyes! Your counsel, dear mistress, is my rule of conduct, your interest in me is a

shade beneath which my soul rejoices. I hear and I obey. May Allah shower his blessing upon you and satisfy your least desires. Here, between your hands, behold Khalif the fisherman, the most devoted of your slaves, the most deferential to your merit. What can I do to serve you?" "Give me a pen, some ink, and a sheet of paper," she answered, and immediately Khalif borrowed these things politely from the neighbours. Heart's-Life wrote a line to the jeweller, Ibn Al-Kirnas, in which she told him what had happened and explained that she was in the house of Khalif the fisherman, who had bought her for a hundred and one dinars. Then she gave the note to Khalif, saying: "Take this to Ibn Al-Kirnas, the khalifat's man of affairs; anyone in the jewel market will know his shop. And do not forget what I have taught you of manners and language." Khalif carried the note to his lips and to his forehead, and then hurried to the shop of Ibn Al-Kirnas in the jewel market. He bowed with exquisite grace before the jeweller and wished him peace. The jeweller returned his salute with the lips only and hardly glanced at him as he asked his business. Khalif stretched forth the note and the jeweller, taking it in the tips of his fingers, laid it unread beside him. He thought that this was some begging demand and therefore bade one of his servants give the man half a dirham; but Khalif put aside the coin with great dignity, saying: "I ask no alms; I only ask you to read this letter." The jeweller unfolded the paper and read its contents; suddenly he kissed the letter with respect and invited Khalif to be seated. "Where is your house, my brother?" he asked; and, when Khalif had told him, called his two chief assistants and said to them: "Accompany my honourable guest

to my banker, Moses, that he may receive a thousand dinars; then lead him back to me at once." When Khalif returned from receiving his thousand dinars from the Jew, he found Ibn Al-Kirnas already mounted on a magnificent mule with gay trappings, and surrounded by a hundred slaves very richly dressed. The jeweller pointed out a second and no less perfect mule to Khalif and begged him to mount; but he objected, saying: "As Allah lives, I have never been upon a mule in my life, dear master; I do not know how to ride." "That makes no matter," said the jeweller, "you will learn today." Then Khalif cried: "I am afraid that she will throw me and break my ribs; but still, here goes, in the name of Allah." With that he leapt nimbly upon the mule's back, but unfortunately he faced the wrong way and took up the tail instead of the bridle. This tickled the mule, who reared and rushed about the street until she unseated her rider. "I always said that feet were best for walking!" cried Khalif, as he picked himself up. But that was the last misfortune of Khalif the fisherman. Thenceforth Destiny was to lead him without swerving along a prosperous road.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundred-and-seventy-fourth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THE JEWELLER SAID to two of his slaves: "Lead your master to the hammam and see that he has a

bath of rare quality; then bring him back to my house, where I shall be waiting." Then he rode alone to Khalif's lodging to bring Heart's-Life also to his house.

The two slaves led Khalif to the hammam, which he had never visited in his life, and put him in charge of the most skilful rubber and the best washers. These elicited from his hair and skin pounds and pounds of assorted filth, with lice and bugs of every variety. They cleaned, refreshed, and dried him. Then they dressed him in a sumptuous silk robe which the two slaves had gone out to buy. Thus habited, he was taken to the home of Ibn Al-Kirnas, where Heart's-Life had already arrived.

Khalif saw the girl seated on a diwan in the great hall of the house, surrounded by a crowd of slaves and servants eager to wait upon her. Already the porter at the door had risen in his honour and respectfully kissed his hand, already those whom he passed had politely wished him joy of his bath; and he was in a state of considerable astonishment. He pretended to see no change in folk, lest he should seem ill-bred; but answered all with urbane eloquence, so that the sound of his own words surprised and flattered him.

He bowed before Heart's-Life and waited for her to speak the first words; she rose in his honour and, taking him by the hand, made him sit beside her. She gave him a porcelain cup filled with sugared sherbert scented with rose-water, and he both took and drank this delicately. He did not make a noise with his mouth and he drank only a portion of it, instead of draining it all down and plunging in his fingers to lick up the drops, as he would most certainly have done

before. He even set the cup down on the tray without breaking it, and gave eloquent expression to the necessary polite phrase: "May the hospitality of this house endure for ever!" "And your life also," answered Heart's-Life, quite delighted with her pupil. After feasting him royally, she said: "The time has come, O Khalif, for you to display all your intelligence. Listen to me and mark well all I say. You must go to the palace of the khalifat and, when he has granted you an audience, must say: 'O Commander of the Faithful, I have a favour to ask in memory of my teaching with the nets.' He will accept in advance and then you must ask him to be your guest tonight. That is all; for he will assuredly come."

Khalif journeyed towards the palace, followed by a numerous retinue of slaves; and, dressed in his robe of thousand dinar silk, his native beauty shone forth and was revealed. The proverb says: "Dress an old stick in good clothes and it looks like the bride." He was seen a long way off by the eunuch Sandal, who ran as fast as his legs could carry him into the throne-hall, and said to the khalifat: "O Prince of Believers, I do not know what has happened, but it seems as if Khalif the fisherman had become king. He advances in a robe worth more than a thousand dinars, the head of a splendid following!" "Bring him in," said the khalifat.

When Khalif was led into the hall where Haroun Al-Rachid sat in his glory, he bowed as only the greatest emirs know how to bow, and said: "Peace be upon you, O Prince of Believers, O khalifat of the Master of the Three Worlds, Defender of the people and of our Faith! May Allah prolong your days,

honouring your reign and exalting its dignity; may He sustain your name upon the top pinnacle of greatness!"

The khalifat marvelled at this change of heart and fortune. "Will you tell me where you got this fair robe, O Khalif?" he asked. "From my palace, O Commander of the Faithful," answered Khalif. "You have a palace, then?" exclaimed Haroun; and the fisherman replied: "I have a palace, O Prince of Believers. Yet it will not be truly a palace, unless you light it with your presence tonight. You are my invited guest." "Your guest?" said Al-Rachid with a smile, "Do you mean alone, or does the invitation extend to any who may be with me?" "It extends to all whom you may desire to bring, my lord," answered Khalif.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundred-and-seventy-fifth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

HAROUN SIGNED to Giafar, who went up to Khalif, saying: "We will be your guests tonight, O Khalif; the Commander of the Faithful wishes it." Satisfied with this assurance, the fisherman kissed the earth between the hands of the khalifat and, after giving Giafar the address of his new abode, returned to Heart's-Life and told her of the success of his visit.

As for the khalifat, he could not understand the matter at all. "Can you explain to me, O Giafar,"

he said, "how Khalif, the boorish laughing-stock of yesterday, can have become, in a single night, a refined and eloquent citizen and a man of riches?" "Allah alone knows by what strange roads Destiny will come to its goal," answered Giafar.

When evening came, the khalifat mounted on horseback and rode with Giafar, Masrur, and one or two others, to Khalif's residence. They halted before the door and saw the ground, from the entrance to the reception hall, covered with expensive carpets, and the carpets strewn with the colours of flowers; also they saw Khalif stand smiling at the foot of the steps. He held Haroun's stirrup and wished him welcome with a low bow; then he led him within doors, in Allah's name.

The khalifat found himself in a high-ceiled hall, ornamented with a perfection of taste, in the middle of which there was a square throne of ivory and gold upon gold feet. As soon as the sultan was seated upon this throne, slaves came in bearing enormous dishes of gold and porcelain, and young cupbearers, as fair as fragments of the moon, presented the guests with precious cups, in which were refreshing concoctions, iced with pure musk. Other and more handsome boys entered in little white robes, who served stuffed geese, chickens, roast lambs, and spitted birds of every kind. As soon as these were eaten, young and delightful Christian slaves, elegantly girt in at the waist, lifted the cloths and carried round salvers of drinks and trifling dulcifications. The wines showed red in crystal vases and gushed red from golden jars; as they were poured out by the white hands of the cupbearers, they gave forth an old and pleasant smell. You would have thought of the poet's lines:

*Pour that old wine for me
And for my friend, this child.
It is a precious wine
Spilled for a wine-adept.
I cannot find a name
For its mild flame
Except:
Wine of my friend, this child.*

Bewildered by what he saw, the khalifat said to Giafar: "By the life of my head, I do not know which I admire more, the magnificence of our reception or the exquisite, and even noble, manner of our host. These things pass my understanding." But Giafar answered: "What we have seen so far is nothing to what He will show, who says: 'Be!' and things are. The aspect of Khalif which I most admire is the certainty of his discourse, the wisdom of what he says. That is a sign that his destiny is a rare one; for, when Allah gives largely to a man, He dowers him first with wisdom as a sign."

While Giafar was speaking, Khalif returned after a short absence, and said to the khalifat: "Will the Commander of the Faithful permit his slave to bring in a singer and a lute player to charm his hours? There is no woman in all Baghdad more expert in music." "The thing is allowed," answered the khalifat; and the fisherman, hastening to the apartments of Heart's-Life, told her that the moment had come.

Heart's-Life, who was already decked and perfumed in readiness, had only to wrap herself in her great izar and cover herself with a light silken veil: Khalif took her by the hand and led her into the hall, which sighed with delight at her royal tread.

She kissed the earth between the khalifat's hands and sat down near him, without being at all recognised. She tuned her lute and executed a ravishing prelude. Then she sang:

*My life is a feather
And this is
Held up by a breath on a thread.
I feed upon hope as on bread,
O nights in the house of our kisses,
O nights of our lying together.*

Hearing this voice of erewhile, the known beauty of it, the khalifat gave a cry and became very pale. As the last words of the song died out on the air, he fell into a swoon.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundred-and-seventy-sixth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

EVERY ONE CROWDED round him with sudden cares; but Heart's-Life, using Khalif as her mouthpiece, begged all the guests to retire and leave her alone to care for the khalifat. When the hall was empty save for the three of them, the girl threw off her izar and veil, and appeared in a dress such as she had worn when the khalifat loved her in the palace. She sat down beside Al-Rachid, sprinkling his face with rose-water and fanning him with her fan.

Soon the khalifat opened his eyes and, looking up into the face to his beloved, nearly fainted a second time. The girl kissed his hands, smiling and weeping at once, and Al-Rachid cried: "Is this the Day of Resurrection, when the dead rise from their graves, or is it a dream?" "Commander of the Faithful," answered Heart's-Life, "this is neither Resurrection nor a dream. I am your living love; my death was only feigned." In brief words she told him all that had passed, and added: "Our present happiness is entirely due to Khalif the fisherman." Al-Rachid laughed, and then wept and sobbed, and then laughed again. When she had finished speaking, he drew her to him and kissed her long upon the lips, holding her to his breast. For an hour they could not speak, and stayed thus in perfect happiness.

At the end of that hour Khalif rose, saying: "As Allah lives, O Prince of Believers, I hope it will not be the stick this time."

The khalifat, who was now quite recovered, chuckled as he answered: "O Khalif, nothing that I can do for you will pay my debt. I can only ask you to be my friend and govern one of the provinces of my empire." "Can a slave refuse the gifts of his master?" answered Khalif; and Haroun went on: "Not only are you appointed governor of a province, with a monthly emolument of ten thousand dinars, but I desire Heart's-Life to choose for you, from among the noble daughters of our city, a young and suitable wife. For her clothing and dowry I will be responsible. Also remember that I wish to see you every day and have you by my side at feasts, among the first of my intimate friends. You shall have a household worthy of your rank, and anything more which your soul desires."

Khalif kissed the earth between the hands of the khalifat. All this promised happiness came to him and many other joys beside. He ceased to be a bachelor and lived for many years with his young wife, whom Heart's-Life chose for him. She was the most beautiful and modest woman of her time. Glory be to Him who casts down His favours upon His people, without taking account of the sum, and distributes joy according to His will!

Then said Shahrazade: "But do not think for a moment, O auspicious King, that this tale is in any way more admirable and strange than one which I have kept in reserve for the end of this night." "I do not doubt what you say, O Shahrazade," cried King Shahryar, "Tell me the name of the tale quickly; for it must be indeed wonderful if it surpasses the tale of Khalif the Fisherman." Shahrazade smiled and said: "O King, my story is called. . . ."

THE ADVENTURES OF HASSAN OF BASSORA

AND SHAHRAZADE SAID TO KING SHAHRYAR:

THE MARVELLOUS STORY which I am going to tell you, O auspicious King, has so strange an origin that I must begin with that, if you are to understand how it ever became known to me.

In years and ages long ago there was a king of Persia and Khorasan called Kindamir, who was paramount over India, Sind, China, and those peoples who lived in the savage lands beyond the Oxus. He

was a man of bravery, a great rider of horses; he could play with the lance, and loved tourneys, hunting, and the clash of arms; but, to all other things, he preferred to talk with men of intelligence and delicate wit. At his feasts he gave the places of honour near himself to poets and story tellers; and if ever a stranger at the palace told him a new or striking tale, King Kindamir loaded him with benefits and, after satisfying his least desires, sent him back to his own land with a fine retinue of horsemen and slaves. His own story tellers and poets he treated as equal to wazirs and emirs, so that his palace was the favoured home of all who could make verses, construct odes, or cause dead time and vanished things to live in the spoken word.

It is not astonishing that a day came when King Kindamir had heard all the tales of the Persians, Arabs, and Indians, and had stored them up in his memory, with the fairest passages in the poets and those teachings drawn by the annalists from a study of old time folk. When he had run through his knowledge and made certain of it, he had nothing more to learn or to hear; therefore his grief and perplexity knew no bounds and he felt that there was nothing to fill his leisure.

He turned to his chief eunuch, saying: "Bring Abu Ali to me." This Abu Ali was the king's favourite teller of tales; he was so expert that he could make one story last a whole year, without discontinuing and without a single night wearying the attention of his hearers. But even he had exhausted his store and the resources of his eloquence; for a long time he had been beggared of new tales.

The eunuch fetched Abu Ali into the presence of

the king, who said to him: "Behold, O father of eloquence, you have exhausted your stores of learning, you are beggared of new stories! Yet I have called you into my presence to tell you that you must, in spite of all, find me a wonderful and unknown tale. I thirst for stories of adventure more than ever; so that, if you can succeed in charming me with beautiful new words, I will give you great tracts of land in return, with strongholds and palaces and a firman freeing you from every tax; I will make you my grand-wazir and seat you on my right: you shall govern according to your whim, with full authority over all the vassals of my throne. Nay, if you desire it, I will bequeath you my throne and, in my lifetime, share all my goods with you. But if your destiny should be so unfortunate that you cannot satisfy my desire, this my passion which prefers a new tale to all the countries of earth, you may start today saying farewell to your family, and tell them that the impaling stake awaits you."

Abu Ali, the tale teller, felt himself lost, and answered: "I hear and I obey." Very yellow in the face, he lowered his despairing head, but, after a little, made bold to say: "O king of time, your ignorant slave begs one thing more from your generosity before he dies: a year's delay in which to find what you desire. If, when that period is past, the tale is not found, and, if found, is not the most beautiful and marvellous that man has heard, I will, without bitterness, experience the stake." "A year is very long," said King Kindamir to himself, "no man knows whether he will be alive tomorrow"; then, aloud, he added: "I am so eager for the tale that I grant you a year, on condition that you do not leave

your house during that time." Abu Ali kissed the earth between the king's hands and returned to his home.

He thought for a long time and then called to him his five young mamelukes, who could write and read and were the most learned and faithful of all his servants. To each of these he gave five thousand dinars, saying: "I brought you up, cared for you, and nourished you in my house expressly for a day such as this; now it is for you to help me and save me from the king." "Order, O master," they replied, "our souls belong to you and we are your ransom!" Then said he: "Each of you must set out for foreign lands upon the different roads of Allah; you must hunt all the kingdoms and countries of the earth for wise men, poets, and famous tale-tellers; from these you must enquire for the Tale of the Adventures of Hassan of Bassora. If, under Allah's favour, one of them knows this story, offer him any price to tell or write it for you; for, without that, your master cannot be saved from the stake." Then he addressed each in turn with particular recommendations; he bade the first visit India and Sind; the second Persia, China, and adjacent lands; the third Khorasan and its dependencies; the fourth all Maghrib from east to west; and to the fifth, he said: "And you, O Mobarak, must journey throughout Egypt and Syria."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundred-and-seventy-seventh Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

HE CHOSE AN auspicious day for the departure of the five mamelukes and sent them upon their different ways with an exhortation not to fail him. Yet, at the end of eleven months, the first four returned with very long noses and told their master that, in spite of the most minute researches, in cities and beneath tents, from tale-tellers and ordinary poets, they had failed to find track of the story and that the Adventures of Hassan were quite unknown.

The heart of the old teller, Abu Ali, retracted and the world grew black before his face. "There is no power or might save in Allah!" he cried, "It is written in the Angel's book that the impaling stake awaits me." And he made his will in expectation of that dark death.

Mobarak, the fifth mameluke, had traversed all Egypt and the greater part of Syria without finding what he sought; even the famous tellers of Cairo could not help him, though their knowledge of tales passes the imagination. They had never even heard their fathers or grandfathers, who were in the same trade, speak of the tale; so the young mameluke journeyed to Damascus, hoping against hope. He was charmed by the climate and gardens of that city, by its waters and magnificence; and he would indeed have enjoyed himself if he had not been preoccupied with his seemingly hopeless mission. As he was walking through the streets on his first evening, in search of some khan wherein to pass the night, he

saw, among the markets, a crowd of hawkers, scavengers, donkeyboys, diggers, merchants, water-carriers, and others hastening quickly in one direction. He was about to run with them, out of curiosity, when a young man bumped into him and tripped over the skirts of his robe. Mobarak helped the stranger to rise and, while dusting his back, asked him whither he and the crowd were hastening so fast. "I can see that you are a stranger," answered the young man, "otherwise you would know that we are hurrying for places in the vaulted hall of the sheikh Ishak, the sublime tale-teller of our city, who has the most marvellous stories in the world. He has always a great crowd of hearers and the last comers cannot get near enough to enjoy the tale at its full; therefore I beg you to excuse me if I hurry on." But the young mameluke took hold of his garment, saying: "O son of excellent parents, I beg you to take me with you, so that I can find a good place; for I greatly desire to hear sheikh Ishak and have come from very far away with no other object." "Follow me then and let us run," cried the youth, and both of them ran towards the hall, jostling peaceable home-going folk to right and left in their great eagerness.

Entering a vast cool hall, Mobarak beheld a venerable old man with a noble face and clear shining brow, raised on a seat in the middle of a silent circle of porters, merchants, nobles, water-carriers, and every condition of folk. He was speaking in a grave voice and taking up the thread of the tale which he had been telling night after night for many months to his faithful auditors. But soon his voice warmed with the prodigious exploits of his warrior; urged by his uncontrollable vehemence, he rose from his seat and ran up and down the hall among his hearers,

seeming to brandish his hero's deadly sword and make mincemeat of his enemies. "So, so, the traitors die; they are damned and fall into the fires of hell! But Allah help him! He is safe! No, no, he is not! Where are our swords, where are our clubs, that we may fly to succour him? Behold, his foes are down, he comes triumphant from the fight! Glory be to the Master of Valour! And now he walks to the tent where his lover waits for him, her multitudinous beauty makes him forget the perils of the day! Glory be to Allah who has created woman to pour balm into the heart of the warrior and fire into his loins!"

Old Ishak brought that evening's instalment to a close with these words; his hearers rose in ecstasy and left the hall, repeating the last few phrases as they went. Marvelling at so admirable an art, Mobarak went up to the sheikh and kissed his hand saying: "Master, I am a stranger and wish to ask you something."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundred-and-seventy-eighth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THE OLD MAN answered his greeting, and said: "Speak, for with us there is no such person as a stranger." Then said the mameluke: "I come from very far away to offer you a present from my master, the teller, Abu Ali of Khorasan, of a thousand golden dinars. My master esteems you to be the lord of tell-

ers in this age over the earth, and wishes by his present to witness so!" "Indeed the fame of Abu Ali of Khorasan is known to all," answered Ishak, "I accept his gift in a most friendly spirit and would wish to send something back to him by you. Tell me what he likes best, so that my gift may be pleasing." "I have succeeded!" said Mobarak to himself; and aloud he answered: "May Allah shower his blessings upon you, dear master! . . . But Abu Ali has a plentitude of this world's riches and no desire except to adorn his mind with the unknown. He sent me to ask, as a favour from you, for some new story with which to gladden the ears of our king. Nothing would please him so well as to learn from you the Tale of the Adventures of Hassan of Bassora, if by chance it be known to you." "Be it upon my head!" exclaimed the sheikh, "Your wish shall be satisfied; for I am the only teller on the face of the earth who knows that story. Your master, Abu Ali, was right to desire it; for it is one of the most extraordinary tales which have ever been. It was told me long ago by a holy man who is now dead, who had it from another holy man, who also departed into the peace of Allah. In return for your master's generosity I will not only tell you the tale, but dictate its every detail to you. I only make one condition: that you will swear a certain oath to me when you accept the copy." "I am ready to accept all your conditions and peril my soul on their fulfilment!" exclaimed the mamcluke; and the old man went on: "That is well. This is one of those tales which cannot be told to everybody, but only to persons of choice intelligence. Therefore I require you to swear, in your own name and your master's, never to recount a word

of it to five kinds of persons: the ignorant, whose gross spirits could not appreciate it; hypocrites, who would be offended by it; schoolmasters, whose feeble and muddy intelligence would not understand it; idiots, for the same reason; and unbelievers, who could not draw from it a profitable moral." "I swear this before Allah and before you, my master!" cried the mameluke; and at once took the purse of a thousand dinars from his belt and gave it to Ishak. The old man provided him with ink and a reed pen, and saying: "Write!" began to dictate, word for word, all the tale of the Adventures of Hassan of Bassora, as the holy man had related it to him. The work went on for seven days and seven nights without a pause and, at the end of that time, the mameluke read over what he had written to the old man, who corrected certain passages and rectified faults of caligraphy. Then Mobarak joyfully kissed his instructor's hand and, after saying farewell, set out upon the road for Khorasan. Happiness made him so light and swift that he arrived in half the usual time of the caravans.

Only ten days of the year of grace remained; in ten days the stake would be set up for Abu Ali in front of the palace gate. All hope had died in the heart of the unfortunate teller and he had called his relations and friends about him that they might help him more bravely to sustain the terrible hour. The mameluke Mobarak burst in upon their lamentations, brandishing the manuscript and, after kissing his master's hand, gave him the precious sheets. On the first there stood, in large letters, the title: "The Tale of the Adventures of Hassan of Bassora."

Abu Ali rose and embraced his mameluke; he made

him sit upon his right hand, and, removing his own garments, put them upon Mobarak. Among other marks of honour and gratitude, he freed him and presented him with ten horses of a noble race, five mares, ten camels, ten mules, three negroes, and two boys. Then he took the life-giving manuscript and transcribed it afresh in letters of gold upon magnificent paper. He made use of his most excellent calligraphy and put large spaces between the words, so that the reading of the tale should be pleasant and easy. He spent nine whole days upon this work, hardly sparing himself the time to shut an eye or eat a date. And on the tenth day, at the hour fixed for his impaling, he shut the new manuscript in a little gold box and presented himself before the king.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundred-and-seventy-ninth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

KING KINDAMIR CALLED together his wazirs, emirs, chamberlains, poets, and learned men. He said to Abu Ali: "The words of kings cannot be broken; read us now the promised tale and I will not forget that which was agreed between us in the beginning." Abu Ali drew the marvellous manuscript from its gold box and, unrolling the first leaf, began to read. He unrolled the second leaf, and the third, and went on reading in the midst of universal admiration; the

effect of his tale was so great that the king did not wish an end ever to be made to that day's instalment. Teller and hearers ate and drank, and then the reading went on until it was finished.

King Kindamir, ravished with delight and certain that he would henceforth know no moment of weariness with such a tale at his disposal, rose in honour of Abu Ali and appointed him grand-wazir upon the spot: he put his own royal mantle on him and gave to him and to his heirs for ever a whole province of his kingdom, with cities, villages, and strongholds. He kept him as intimate friend and companion; and also he shut the manuscript and its box in his treasury of stories, from which, whenever weariness knocked at the doors of his spirit, he had it taken out and read to him.

And that, O auspicious King, continued Shahrazade, is the marvellous tale which I am going to tell you; I am able to do so because I have in my possession an exact copy of Kindamir's manuscript.

IT IS RELATED—but Allah is all-wise and all-beneficent—that there was once, in the drift of years long ago, a youth of the city of Bassora who was the most handsome, gracious, and dainty of his time. His name was Hassan, and none had ever been called Beautiful with better cause. His father and mother loved him greatly, for he was the child of their old age, begotten by following the advice of a magician who had made them eat the middle portions of a great snake, according to the prescription of our Lord Sulayman (upon whom be prayer and peace!). At the time appointed Allah, the All-hearing, the All-Seeing, permitted that Hassan's father should pass into His peace, and the boy found himself heir to

great riches. As he had been badly brought up and spoilt by his parents, he soon wasted his father's savings in feasting and dissipation with young men of his own age; but, when he had nothing left, his mother could not bear to see him sorrow and therefore opened for him a goldsmith's shop in the market with her own portion of the inheritance.

Allah aiding, Hassan's beauty drew the eyes of all passengers towards his shop, and none crossed the market without stopping at the door to contemplate and marvel at this work of the Creator. The shop became the continuous centre of a crowd of merchants, women, and children, who came together to watch the new youth using his hammer, and admire him at their leisure.

One day, as Hassan sat in his shop and the crowd outside was beginning to diminish, a Persian passed, having a long white beard, and a tall white turban. His carriage proclaimed nobility and, in his hand, he carried an old book. After regarding Hassan attentively for some time, he approached, exclaiming loudly: "As Allah lives, an excellent goldsmith!" Then he began to scratch his head with a gesture of limitless admiration and so stayed until the rest of the passers had dispersed to the noon prayer. At length he entered the shop and saluted Hassan; the young man returned his greeting and begged him to be seated. The Persian sat down with a tender smile, saying: "My child, you are a youth of very pleasing appearance. As I have no son, I wish to adopt you and teach you the secrets of my art; it is unique in the world and thousands upon thousands beg to be instructed in it. Yet now, for the first time, my soul and its love are moved to reveal what I have so carefully hidden, that you may be the depository of my

learning after I am dead. I will rear an unpierceable wall between poverty and you, sparing you the fatigue of this trivial trade, which exposes your too charming person to dust and coal and flame." "As Allah lives, O venerable uncle," answered Hassan, "I ask nothing better than to be your son and the heir to your skill. When will you begin to initiate me?" "Tomorrow," replied the Persian, rising to go. He took Hassan's head between his hands and kissed it, and then left the shop without another word.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundred-and-eightieth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

IN A FEVER OF excitement Hassan shut his shop and ran to tell his mother what had passed. "What are you telling me, Hassan?" asked the old woman doubtfully. "How can you believe a Persian heretic?" "The venerable sage is not a heretic and his turban is of white muslin like those of true Believers," answered Hassan; but his mother continued: "Do not make any mistake, my son. These Persians are cheats and libertines; their learning is alchemy, and Allah alone knows what snares they set in the darkness of their souls for the confounding of their fellow men." But Hassan laughed, saying: "Mother, we are poor and have nothing to tempt the cupidity of any. Besides, there is no one in the whole of

Bassora with a face and carriage more engaging than this Persian. I have seen in him evident signs of virtue and good will. Instead of criticising him, let us thank Allah for His compassion." His mother answered nothing to all this and Hassan's impatient anxiety prevented him from closing an eye all night. Next morning he went very early to the market with his keys, and opened his shop before the arrival of the other merchants. When, in a little while, the Persian entered, he rose in his honour and would have kissed his hands, but the other embraced him instead and asked him if he were married. "As Allah lives, I am a bachelor," answered Hassan, "though my mother is always urging me to take a wife." "That is excellent," said the Persian. "If you had been married I could not have introduced you to my secrets. Have you any copper in your shop?" "I have an old battered brass dish," answered Hassan, and the sage went on: "That is what I need. Light your furnace, put the crucible on the fire, and use your bellows. Then cut up the old dish with your scissors." When Hassan had done these things, the Persian said again: "Put the brass scraps into the crucible and work at the fire until they melt." Hassan placed the pieces in the crucible, worked at the fire and blew upon the metal with his air cane until the metal melted. At once the Persian approached the furnace and read unknown incantations over the bubbling metal from his old book; then, raising his voice, he cried: "Hak! Mak! Bak! Let the virtue of the sun penetrate you, O vile metal! Hak! Mak! Bak! Let the virtue of the gold cleanse you, O vile metal! Hak! Mak! Bak! O brass, be gold!" As he spoke these words, the old man drew from the muslin folds of his turban a small paper

packet; opening this, he dropped from it a pinch of saffron yellow powder into the molten brass. At once the mass hardened and formed an ingot of the most pure gold.

Hassan was amazed; but, at a sign from the Persian, he rubbed one corner of the shining ingot with his testing file, and made sure that he had to do with true gold, of the kind which is most eagerly sought for among jewellers. Again he would have kissed the old man's hands; but the other prevented him, saying: "Go quickly to the market and sell this gold. Lock away the money which you get for it in your own house and say no word of what you know to anyone." Hassan hurried to the market and gave the ingot to the crier who, after determining its weight and quality, sold it for two thousand dinars. Hassan took the money and sped on wings of joy to his mother; the old woman was so astonished that she could say nothing; but, when Hassan with a laugh told her it was the fruit of the old man's learning, she lifted terrified hands, and cried: "There is no God but Allah! There is no power or might save in Allah! What did you do with that Persian alchemist, my son?" "He has begun to instruct me in alchemy," answered the boy, "He first showed me how a base metal could be changed into pure gold." Then, without paying any attention to his mother's forebodings, he took from the kitchen the large brass mortar, in which the woman used to pound garlic and onions and make crushed corn cakes, and ran with it to his shop where the Persian awaited him. He set the mortar down on the floor, began to blow up the fire and, when the Persian asked him what he was doing, answered that he wished to turn his mother's mortar into gold. The sage laughed and ex-

claimed: "You are mad to think of showing gold ingots in the market twice in the same day; you would rouse all sorts of suspicions and draw upon our heads the penalties for alchemy." "You are right," answered Hassan, "but I am very anxious to learn the secret of your art." The Persian laughed even more heartily than before. "Again you are mad, Hassan!" he exclaimed, "Do you think that the art and the secrets of the art can be taught in the open street, or that a lad may serve his apprenticeship in the middle of the market, under the eyes of the police? If you really wish to be seriously instructed, take up all your tools and follow me to my house." Without a moment's hesitation Hassan took up his tools and followed the Persian.

But, on the road, Hassan recalled what his mother had said about the men of Persia, and, a thousand doubtful thoughts flocking into his head, he halted and began to reflect deeply. The Persian saw him stop and said, with another laugh: "You certainly are mad, Hassan! If you were as clever as you are delightful, you would never baulk before so fair a destiny. I wish nothing but your happiness, and you hesitate! . . . Still, my son, as I do not wish you to have the least doubt of my intentions, I will teach you the mysteries of my science in your own house." "That will calm my mother's fears," answered Hassan; and the Persian bade him lead the way.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundred-and-eighty-first Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

WHEN THEY ARRIVED, Hassan begged the Persian to wait in the vestibule and ran, like a young stallion leaping in the fields of spring, to tell his mother of their guest. "Now that he is about to eat food in our house," he said, "there will be bread and salt between us and you need have no anxiety." The mother answered: "Allah protect us, my son! The bond of bread and salt is a holy thing with us, but these abominable Persians, fire-worshippers, perverts, perjurers, do not respect it. Calamity still pursues us, my son. . . . You say that, when I have seen him, I will not let him depart from the house; but I swear, by the tomb of your father, that I myself will not stay while this heretic is here. When he has gone I will wash the tiles of the room and burn incense; I will not touch even you for a whole month for fear of being soiled. Yet, as he is already in our house and as we have the gold which he sent us, I will prepare a meal for you two, before I go to take refuge with the neighbours." While Hassan went back to the Persian, she spread the cloth and, after having made large purchases, prepared a meal on it of roast fowls, cucumbers, ten sorts of pastry and preserves. Then she fled to the neighbours.

Hassan introduced his friend into the dining-room and begged him to be seated, saying: "There must be the bond of bread and salt between us." "Certainly, for that bond is inviolable," answered the old man. He sat down by Hassan's side and, as the two

ate, he said: "Hassan, my son, I swear by the sacred bond of bread and salt, which is now between us, that if I did not love you very dearly I would not instruct you in those secret matters for which we are met here." So saying he drew the little packet of yellow powder from his turban and showed it to the youth, adding: "With a single pinch of this you can transmute ten pounds of brass into gold; for it is quintessential elixir in solid and powdered form; I derived it from the substance of a thousand simples and a thousand ingredients, each more complicated than the last. The enormous labours and fatigues which I first had to undergo I will tell you some day." He handed the packet to Hassan and, while the boy was eagerly examining it, slipped from his turban a morsel of Cretan banj and mingled it with a pastry. This he offered to Hassan and the latter swallowed it without raising his eyes from the powder; only to fall immediately head over heels in deep unconsciousness.

The Persian uttered a cry of triumph and leapt to his feet, saying: "Ah, charming Hassan, how many years have I sought you! Now I have you, and you shall not escape my will!" Pulling up his sleeves and fastening his belt, he bent Hassan in two, head to knees, and tied him securely in this position. Then he emptied a chest of the clothing which it contained, and put Hassan into it, with all the gold which had resulted from his first alchemical operation. He went out and came back with a porter, who took the chest upon his back and carried it to the seashore. Here a ship awaited him, and the captain, as soon as he was on board, weighed anchor and put out to sea. So much for the Persian ravisher and the chest which contained Hassan.

When the boy's mother found that her son and the chest and the gold had disappeared, when she saw garments strewn about the room and the house door hanging open, she understood that Hassan was lost to her for ever and that Destiny had run its course. She gave herself up to despair, beating her face and tearing her clothes; she groaned and wept and cried sorrowfully: "Alas, alas, my child! O life of my heart, alas, alas!" She spent all that night running madly among the neighbours, seeking news of her son, and, when they would have comforted her, she was inconsolable. From that time she continued sitting in grief and tears by a tomb which she caused to be built in the middle of the house. On it was written the name of Hassan and the date of the day on which he had been ravished away from her love. Also, upon its marble, she engraved these lines, so that she might ceaselessly say them over to herself and weep:

*My son comes to me when the dawn is grey,
But when I wake for joy he goes away;
Though his appearance is but fantasy
I should be happier if it would stay.*

Thus the poor mother lived with her grief.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundred-and-eighty-second Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THE PERSIAN, who had escaped with the chest on board a ship, was in reality a terrible magician, called Bahram the Fire-worshipper, because of his alchemical pursuits. Each year he would choose out from amongst the sons of the Mussulmans some well-made boy, whom he would abduct and use as his perverse and faithless nationality suggested. The Master of Proverbs has said: *He is a dog, the son of a dog, the grandson of a dog; and all his line were always dogs! How then could he be other than a dog, or do other than a dog?* During the voyage he went down every day into the hold and, lifting the lid of the chest, gave Hassan food and drink, feeding him with his own hand and leaving him always in a state of stupor. When the ship came to the end of her voyage, he went ashore with the chest and watched the vessel depart again for the open sea.

Then Bahram opened the chest, undid Hassan's bonds, and destroyed the effect of the banj by making him breathe at vinegar and casting a powdered counter-banj into his nostrils. Hassan came to himself and looked round; he saw that he was lying upon a beach, the pebbles and sand of which were red, green, white, blue, yellow, and black; so that he might be sure that he was not upon his native coast. He rose in astonishment and beheld, seated behind him on a rock, the Persian alchemist; and the old man was looking at him with one closed and one open eye. At once he realized that he had been duped and, call-

ing to mind the unhappy predictions of his mother, resigned himself to the decrees of Destiny. "I put my trust in Allah!" he cried, and walked up to the Persian who did not move. "What does this mean, my father?" he asked in a trembling voice, "Is there not the bond of bread and salt between us?" But Bahram laughed, saying: "By Fire and Light, who speaks of bread and salt to Bahram? I worship the Flame and the Spark, I worship the Sun and the Light of the Sun. I have already raped nine hundred and ninety-nine young Mussulmans into my power and you are the thousandth; but, by Light and Fire, you are the fairest of them all! I did not think that you would fall so easily into my toils, O Hassan; but, glory be to the Sun, you are now in my power and shall see how much I love you. First you must abjure your Faith and adore that which I adore." Hassan's surprise turned to a boundless indignation at these words. "Sheikh of ill-omen," he cried, "what abomination is this?" So the Persian, who had other views for the moment, did not insist on a renunciation that day, but said: "My proposal was only a test, Hassan, only a test of your Faith; you have come out of it with great credit in the sight of Allah. My true and single object in bringing you here was to find the needed solitude in which to initiate you. That high and pointed mountain, which looks over the sea, is Cloud Mountain and there I find the necessary elements for my elixir. If you will let yourself be led to its top, I swear by Light and Fire that you will not regret it. If I had wanted to force you, I could have taken you there while you were asleep. When we reach the summit we will gather the stalks of those plants which grow above the clouds, and I will

then teach you further." Hassan dared not refuse, for there was compulsion in the old man's words; but he wept bitterly and remembered his mother.

"Do not weep, Hassan," said Bahram. "Soon you will see how very useful my advice can be." Then said Hassan: "How can we climb that mountain? It is as steep as a wall." "Do not let that trouble you," answered the magician, "we will go more easily than birds."

He drew from his robe a little copper drum, which was engraved with talismanic characters and had a cock's skin stretched tightly over it. He beat on this with his fingers and at once a cloud of dust rose round them, from which came a sound of neighing; in the twinkling of an eye there stood before them a vast black horse with wings, which pawed the ground and jetted flames from its nostrils. The Persian mounted this beast and helped Hassan up behind him; at once the horse beat its wings and rose from the earth. Before the riders had time to open one eye and shut the other, it set them upon the top of Cloud Mountain and disappeared.

The Persian looked at Hassan, with all the evil returned to his eyes, and cried in a shout of laughter: "Now, Hassan, you really are in my power; for there is no creature here to help you. Prepare to satisfy all my caprices and begin by swearing that there is no power save in Fire, the Father of Light."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundred-and-eighty-third Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

BUT, INSTEAD, HASSAN recoiled, crying: "There is no God but Allah! And Muhamad is the Prophet of Allah! You, O vile Persian, are an impious infidel and the Master of Power uses me as a sword against you." With the quickness of light he hurled himself on the sorcerer and, snatching the drum from his hands, pushed him towards the edge of the mountain. Then, thrusting out both his arms, he precipitated the perjured old man into the gulf, so that he turned upon himself in the air and was broken to pieces upon the rocks of the seashore. His evil soul departed and Eblis gathered his life-breath to fan the fire of Hell. Such was the death of Bahram the Fire-worshipper, magician and alchemist.

Freed from his captor, who would have made him commit every abomination, Hassan first examined the magic drum with its cock's skin; but, being ignorant of how to use it, he would not venture the attempt. Instead, he hung it at his belt and looked about him. He saw that the mountain upon which he stood was so high that it towered over the loftiest clouds, and that its summit was formed of a great plain, like a dry sea, far off on which there was a shining flame. "Where there is fire, there is man," thought Hassan; and began to walk in the direction of the light, pushing on boldly with no companion save Allah. As he approached his goal he made out the shining flame to be the sun beating upon a gold palace with a gold dome, supported upon four high columns of gold.

Being tired with his long walk and all the emotions

of the day, he said to himself: "Whatever king or Ifrit lives in such a place, I will ask the doorkeeper for a little water and some food; if he is a kindly man he will let me sleep in a corner." Trusting in his destiny, he walked up to the great door, which was hewn in a block of emerald, and ventured into the front court.

He had only gone a few paces when he saw two young girls, blossoming in beauty, who sat on a marble bench and played at chess. They were so absorbed in their game that, at first, they did not perceive Hassan's entrance; but soon the younger looked up and saw the beautiful youth standing before them. She rose quickly to her feet, saying: "Behold, dear sister, here is a handsome young man. He must be one of those luckless youths whom the magician Bahram brings every year to Cloud Mountain; but how can he have escaped from that devil?" Hassan threw himself at the feet of the younger girl, crying: "Dear mistress, I am indeed one of those." Seeing so beautiful a youth lying at her feet, with tear-drops sparkling at the corners of his dark eyes, the girl was moved even to her bowels and, with a pitying face, exclaimed: "Bear witness, my sister, that, in your presence and before Allah, I adopt this young man as my brother; he shall share the pleasure and pain of all my days." She took Hassan by the hand and helped him to his feet, kissing him as a loving sister might have done; then she led him into the palace and gave him a refreshing bath in the hammam. After that, she dressed him in magnificent garments, throwing away his old and soiled ones, and, finally, with the help of her sister, conducted him to her own room, one going on each side and holding him under the arms. The two girls made their young guest sit

between them and kept him company while he ate. When he had finished, the younger said: "Dearly loved brother, darling brother, whose coming has made the stones of our palace dance for joy, what is your charming name, and what has led you to our door?"

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundred-and-eighty-fourth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

"DEAR SISTER, and you our elder sister, I am called Hassan," answered the youth, "My happy destiny led me to your palace only after great tribulation." He told them of his adventures with Bahram the Fire-worshipper, and they exclaimed together indignantly: "The evil dog! His death was richly deserved and you did well, O brother, to cut him off from the air."

Then the elder turned to the younger, saying: "Now, Roseleaf, you must tell your brother our story, so that he shall remember it." And the delightful Roseleaf said:

Beautiful brother, we are princesses; I am Roseleaf and this is Myrtleberry; we have five other sisters, more beautiful than ourselves, who are hunting at present but will soon return. The eldest of us all is Morning-Star, the second, Evening-Star, the third, Carnelian, the fourth, Emerald, and the fifth, Ancmon. We are the daughters of the same father, though not of the same mother; but I, the youngest of all, and Myrtleberry were carried in the same breast. Our father, one of the powerful kings of the Jinn, is so proud a tyrant that he thinks no one worthy to marry

his daughters; he has sworn an oath that none of us shall ever be wed and, to see that this should be kept for ever, he called his wazirs to him, saying: "Do you not know of some place which neither man nor Jinni have ever visited; one suitable as a home for my seven daughters?" "O king," answered the wazirs, "it is in our thought that women and girls were created by Allah for no other purpose than to unite their delicate organs with man. The Prophet (upon whom be prayer and peace!) has said: 'No woman of Islam shall grow old in virginity.' Therefore it would be a great shame upon the head of our king if his daughters did grow old in virginity. And, as Allah lives, what a sorrow it would be upon their youth!" But our father said: "I would rather see them dead than married! If you do not at once tell me of the place I seek, your heads shall go to find it." "In that case, O king," answered the wazirs hastily, "there is a place in which your daughters can be free from the approach of man: Cloud Mountain, which in old time was inhabited by those Ifrits who rebelled against Sulayman. They built a gold palace there as a refuge and, since their time, it has been abandoned. Its neighbourhood is favoured with an excellent climate; it abounds in fruit trees and delicious streams cooler than ice and sweeter than honey." Our father at once sent a formidable escort of Jinn and Marids who, when they had installed us in this palace, returned to his kingdom.

Since we came, we have seen the truth of the wazirs' words, for this uninhabited country is filled with flowers and rich in forests. It shines with pasturage and orchards; courses of living water flow in it like strings of pearl or bars of silver; the streams push each other out of the way to see the smiling flowers

and mirror them; the air is filled with mingled bird song and perfume; ringdoves and turtles chant in the boughs of Spring; swans float gloriously upon the lakes, and there are peacocks like young brides, for their garments are incrustated with coral and tinted diamond; the earth is suave with camphor and holds the beauty of Paradise.

Therefore, dear brother, we are not unhappy in such a land, and in our gold palace; we thank Allah for His favours and only regret that we have no youths to bear us company, no man's delightful face to see on waking, no loving well-intentioned heart to please us. That is why we are so delighted to receive you, Hassan.

When she had told her tale, sweet Roselcaf loaded Hassan with gifts and attentions, as is the custom with brothers and friends, and went on talking to him most affectionately.

Soon the five other princesses came in from their hunting and were pleased beyond measure to find so pleasant a brother waiting for them. They welcomed him warmly and, after the first greeting, asked him to promise to stay with them for a long time. Hassan readily promised, as he could find no reason to urge against the thing.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundred-and-eighty-fifth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

HE DWELT WITH them among the marvels of their palace and became the companion of their hunting

and walking. His delight and self-congratulation on having such sisters was only equalled by the pride and joy which they took in their miraculous brother. They passed their days in playing together in the gardens and along the streams; and, in the evening, would teach each other: Hassan by describing the customs of his native land the girls by telling the history of the Jinn. This agreeable life made Hassan daily more beautiful, and he grew as fond of his seven sisters, especially of young Roseleaf, as if they had been all children of the same mother.

One day, as they sat together singing in a thicket, a whirlwind of dust filled the sky and covered the sun before them, a noise like thunder rolled in their direction. The seven princesses said fearfully to Hassan: "Run and hide yourself in the pavilion!" and Roseleaf, taking him by the hand, hid him in the pavilion of the garden. The dust died down and there appeared a whole army of the Jinn, an escort sent by the king of Jinnistan to bring his daughters to a festival which he was about to give in honour of a neighbouring monarch. When she heard this, Roseleaf ran back to Hassan and kissed him with tears in her eyes, her breast shaken by unhappy sobs. She told him of their departure, and added: "You, dear brother, can wait our return in the palace; I make you master of it. Here are the keys of all the rooms; but I beg you not to open that door which this key fits." She pointed out, on the bunch which she gave him, a key ornamented with a single turquoise; and Hassan, holding her close, promised not only to wait for her return, but also not to make use of the forbidden key. The six sisters also found time to come secretly to the pavilion and bid their brother tender farewells, kissing him by turns; then the seven de-

parted with their escort for their father's kingdom.

Hassan lived alone in the palace, a prey to great melancholy; and, as solitude was the only cause of his sorrow, he strove to lessen his regret by visiting the girls' rooms one after the other. His heart beat tenderly when he saw the places which his seven sisters had occupied and the things of beauty which belonged to them. In the course of his visiting he came to the door which might be opened by the forbidden key; but he refrained from opening it and returned the way he had come. Yet, a little later, he thought to himself: "Why did Roseleaf forbid me to open that door? What can there be behind it so mysterious? But I have sworn not to enter." As night had fallen and solitude weighed upon him, he lay down to sleep; but the thought of the door so stayed with him and so tortured him that he could not close his eyes. At first he said: "Shall I open it in spite of all?" and then: "I will wait for the morning," but at last, as he still could not sleep: "I will open the door at once and see what is behind it, even if I die!" He lit a torch and, walking to the forbidden room, placed the key in the lock. The door opened noiselessly, as if of itself, and Hassan entered.

Look about him as he would, he could at first see nothing: no furniture, no mats, no carpet; but at last, in circling the room, he saw a ladder of black wood standing against the wall in one of the corners; and the top of it disappeared through a hole in the ceiling. Hassan set his torch upon the floor and, climbing the ladder, began to adventure through the hole. As his head advanced he found himself in the open air, his eyes level with a terrace which was covered like a garden with plants and flowering shrubs. When he set foot upon it, he beheld, stretch-

ing before him under the magic brilliance of the moon, the most beautiful landscape ever seen of human eyes.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundred-and-eighty-sixth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

A QUIET LAKE LAY sleeping at his feet and all the beauty of the sky was looking down into it; in the ripples by the shore laughed the leaves of dancing laurels, of flowering myrtles, of snow-crowned almond trees, with loops of wisteria. The reflection seemed to echo the night song of the birds; the silken surface of the lake, stretching away between trees, at last bathed the feet of a strangely builded palace, whose misty domes were lost in the crystal of the sky. The palace joined the lake by a marble and mosaic stair, at the foot of which a royal platform had been built out into the water, with alternating bricks of ruby and emerald, and silver and gold. Upon this platform a veil of green silk, held by four light pillars of rose alabaster, shaded a throne of aloe wood and gold, climbed by a vine of heavy clusters, whose grapes were pearls. The whole was fenced by a slender trellis, woven of silver and red gold. No king could have realised the harmonious splendour of these things.

As Hassan stood still, for fear of troubling this delightful peace, a flight of great birds came down out of the sky. When they lighted on the border of the lake, he could see that there were ten of them;

their white plumage ruffled the grass, as they walked hither and thither upon it. Then, seeming to obey the largest and fairest among them, who had gone slowly up on to the platform and mounted the throne, they slipped out of their feathers with one graceful movement and came forth, as moons from behind a cloud, ten naked laughing girls. They dived into the water, which met each with a sparkle of diamonds, and bathed delightfully, playing together. The fairest swam after the others, caught them, and grasped them in a thousand pretty caresses; she tickled and nibbled them until their laughter echoed all across the lake.

When their bath was over, they came up out of the lake and the fairest sat upon the throne with no other clothing than her hair. As Hassan detailed her beauties he felt his reason depart from him, and said to himself: "Now I know why Roseleaf forbade me to open that door; my rest has gone for ever." What marvels did he not behold, for she was the most perfect of the master works of God! She was naked; the balance of her neck and the black fire of her eyes surpassed gazelles; her body the wind-dancing araka; her hair was a winter night; her mouth a rose, sealed with the seal of Sulayman; her teeth were hailstones in the sun. Her neck was a bar of silver; her belly had its dimples and counter-dimples; her buttocks their valleys and stages; her navel could have held an ounce of black musk; her thighs, though heavy and firm, had the resilience of cushions filled with ostrich down. Between these thighs there lay in its warm nest, like a little rabbit without ears, her pretty love tale, with terrace and hollow, hill and vale, and fair regale to banish grief and bale. You would have called it a smooth crystal dome or an inverted silver

cup. To such a girl these lines are applicable :

*She comes to me dressed in beauty,
A tree in roses;
Her breasts are apples.
Yet her breasts are more than apples,
Her flesh than roses;
For a man may bathe in a bath of roses
And eat of apples.*

She sat, royal and naked, on the throne by the borders of the lake.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundred-and-eighty-seventh Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

WHEN SHE HAD rested from her bath, she bade her companions, who were crouched beside her on the platform, to bring her her undergarments; they clothed her only with a gold tissue over the shoulders, a green gauze about her hair, and a brocaded belt; thus she was like a new-made bride, more marvellous than any miracle. Hassan, who watched from behind the terraced trees, could make no movement for very love, though that same love urged him most powerfully to move. "O princesses, the dawn is near," said the girl to her companions, "we must depart, for our land is far and we have rested." They clothed her in her feathers and, putting on their own, flew off with her, going up like white light into the morning sky.

Hassan followed them with his eyes until they were out of sight and then, as if he had been in a swoon, continued to gaze upon the empty horizon. No human girl had ever thrown his soul into such confusion; tears of desire fell down his cheeks, and he cried: "Alas, poor Hassan! Your heart is with the daughters of the Jinn, your heart which you thought steeled against the glances of women." Dreaming with his cheek on his hand, he extemporised these lines:

She came to tear my heart, and then above

The sunrise the white mists have hidden her.

(The morning dew received her, dressed in light).

Who dare pretend that there is sweet in love?

If love be sweet, how more than sweet is myrrh.

He sighed in this way until sunrise and then, leaving the platform for the margin of the lake, wandered about it, seeking in the morning air for perfume which should tell him of his heart's desire. He wearied through the day in expectation of the night and, when darkness came, climbed up on to the terrace to wait the return of the birds. But they did not come on that night, or any other night; and Hassan could not eat or drink or sleep. He gave himself up to his passion, growing wan and weak, lying upon the grass and saying: "Oh, death were better!"

While he was in this woeful state the seven daughters of the king of Jinnistan returned from their father's festival; and the youngest, without even waiting to change her travelling robes, went in search of Hassan. She found him lying pale and changed upon his bed, with half-shut eyes from which tears fell down his cheeks. She gave an unhappy cry at seeing him thus and, throwing herself beside him, held

him in her arms and kissed him upon the forehead and eyes. "Dear brother," she said, "my heart breaks to see you as you are. Tell me your grief, that I may find a remedy." Hassan sobbed and, shaking his head, would say no word; so the girl wept with him, and continued with infinite tenderness: "Soul of my soul, Hassan, my brother, delight of my eyes! My life has become narrow and flavourless to me seeing the roses vanished from your cheeks and your eyes thus sunken in your head. I conjure you not to hide your pains from a sister who would gladly ransom your life with a thousand of her own." She covered him with kisses, holding his two hands against her breast, and begged him, upon her knees, so wildly, that at length Hassan, with many dolorous sighs and in a faint voice, improvised these lines:

*If you could see the pleasant bands of sleep
Eternally defeated by my eyes,
If you could see the place my heart should keep
Emptied, and then invaded by my sighs;
You, with a doctor's skill,
Might recognise, and fail to cure, my ill.*

Then his tears fell abundantly, and he added: "Ah, sister, what help can you bring to one who suffers for his own fault? I fear that you can do nothing, save let me die alone with my grief." But Roseleaf cried: "The name of Allah be upon you and about you, O Hassan! What are you saying? Surely I shall die if I cannot help you!" Then said Hassan: "Dear Roseleaf, for ten days I have taken no food, because of such and such things which happened to me." And he told her his adventure by the lake in all its details.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundred-and-eighty-eighth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

INSTEAD OF BEING offended at his disobedience, as she might have been, Roseleaf pitied him with all her heart, and said: "Calm that spirit which I love, my brother, cool your eyes and dry your tears; for I swear that I am ready to risk dear life itself and my immortal soul to realise your desire upon this unknown girl. In Allah's name, I swear it! But I counsel you to keep the matter secret from my sisters, for otherwise we might both be lost. If they speak to you of the forbidden door, say that you do not know which it is and, if they grieve to see you brought so low, and question you, answer that you have suffered from their long absence." "I will indeed speak in that way," answered Hassan, "Your plan is excellent." He kissed Roseleaf and felt his heart grow light, because he now knew that she was not angry at his disobedience. He even asked for food; so that Roseleaf, after a last kiss, hastened to her sisters, to whom she said, with tears still upon her cheek: "Alas, poor Hassan is very ill. For ten days food has not entered into him; his stomach was closed by grief for our absence. We left the poor beloved with no one to keep him company; therefore he remembered his mother and his native land, and those memories steeped him in the gall of bitterness."

The princesses, who had a kindly and sensitive spirit, hastened with food and drink to their brother

and did all they could to cheer him with their presence; as a distraction, they described the entertainments and marvels which they had witnessed in their father's palace in Jinnistan. During a whole month they cared most tenderly for him, without succeeding in a perfect cure.

At the end of that time they all went hunting, save Roseleaf, who insisted upon remaining with Hassan. When they had departed, well-pleased that their young sister should have taken upon herself the care of their guest, Roseleaf helped Hassan to rise and, taking him in her arms, assisted him on to the terrace which overlooked the lake. There, pillowing his head upon her breast, she said: "Now tell me, my lamb, in which of these pavilions by the water did you see her who so greatly moved you?" "It was in none of the pavilions," answered Hassan, "but first on the lake side and then upon the throne of that platform." Roseleaf became very pale, and cried: "Oh, sorrow, sorrow! That girl is the daughter of the king of the Jinn, who reigns over the whole vast empire of which my father is but a lieutenant. He lives in a land too far to be reached, environed by a sea which neither man nor Jinni may cross. He has a guard of warrior-girls, sprung from noble parentage, and each of these commands an army of five thousand amazons. You saw the youngest, most beautiful, and bravest of his seven daughters; her name is Splendour. She comes to divert herself in this place at each new moon, bringing with her the daughters of her father's chamberlains. The feathery mantles, which carry them through the air like birds, belong to the wardrobe of the Jinn. It is only by means of these garments that we can attain our end; for, if you would become master of her body, you will have to steal her magic

cloak. You must wait here in hiding until she comes, and take advantage of the time when she is bathing in the lake to get possession of the plumes. If you take them and nothing more, she shall belong to you. Be very careful not to yield when she begs you to return her mantle; for, if you give it back, you will have destroyed yourself and us and our father with us. Rather seize her by the hair and drag her with you; then she will submit and obey; and what shall happen, shall happen."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundred-and-eighty-ninth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

HASSAN WAS TRANSPORTED with joy; he felt life and strength return to him and, leaping to his feet, took his sister's head in his hands and thankfully kissed her. They both went down again into the palace and passed the time in pleasant talk of this or that with the other princesses.

The night of the next day was new moon and Hassan went to hide himself behind the platform by the lake. He had not waited long before a beating of wings broke the dark silence of the sky and the birds flew down into the moonlight. They threw aside their feathery cloaks and silken underclothes, and went down into the lake. Splendour, the king's daughter, also dived in the glory of her naked flesh; and she was more beautiful and desirable than the first time. Yet, in spite of the great longing and admiration

which held him, Hassan was able to steal unseen to the place where they had left their garments and, taking the plumage of the royal girl, return in safety to his hiding place.

As soon as Splendour came from bathing she saw, by the disorder of the clothes upon the grass, that some strange hand had been profaning them. Going nearer, she discovered that her own cloak of plumes had been taken; so, with a terrified cry, she began to beat her breast. Ah, how fair she was under the moonlight in her despair! Hearing her cries, her companions ran to her and learnt what had happened. At once each hurried into her own magic garment and, with no care for drying her wet nakedness or putting on her silks, fled away wildly through the air. As swiftly as a frightened deer or doves escaping from a falcon, they disappeared beyond sight, leaving their princess, the angry and unhappy Splendour, deserted by the side of the lake.

Although Hassan was trembling with emotion he bounded from his hiding place towards the naked girl. She fled and he ran after her round the lake, calling upon her by tender names and assuring her that he intended no evil. But she, panting and with arms thrown forward, ran on, giving her hair to the wind, and leapt among the trees like a hind at bay, for fear that her virgin flesh should be surprised. Hassan caught her at last and, winding her hair about his fist, constrained her to follow. She shut her eyes and walked without struggling; so that Hassan, who had turned a deaf ear to her tears and supplications, was able to lead her to his chamber and lock her in. Then he hurried to tell his sister the good news.

Roseleaf went at once into Hassan's chamber and found the forsaken Splendour biting the hands of

despair and weeping all her tears. She threw herself at the captive's feet most humbly, and said, kissing the earth: "Peace and the grace and blessing of Allah be upon you, O queen! You light our house and perfume it!" "Is that you, Roseleaf?" asked Splendour, "Is it thus that you allow the sons of men to treat the daughter of your king? You know my father's might, you know that all the kings of the Jinn bow down before him, you know that he commands legions of Ifrits and Marids, numberless like the sands of the sea; and yet you have dared to receive a man into your dwelling to surprise and betray me! Without you no man could have found the way to the lake where I bathe!"

Then said Roseleaf: "O princess, O daughter of our king, O most beautiful and admired of women, O lustral one, this boy who surprised your bath has also no equal. In truth, his manners are too exquisite for his intention to have the least harm in it; but, when a thing is written by Destiny, the saying must be fulfilled. And it was the destiny of this beautiful youth which made him become passionately amorous of your beauty. Lovers are excusable, and to be loved as he loves cannot be unpleasing to you. Did not Allah create women for men? And is not this the most charming boy in all the world? O mistress, if you only knew how ill he has been since he first saw you! He has nearly died for love of you." She told the princess all the violence of Hassan's heart, and thus ended her appeal: "Do not forget, dear mistress, that he chose you from among your ten companions as the most beautiful, the most wonderful; and they also were naked and easy to surprise!"

When she heard such discourse, Splendour realised that she would have to renounce all thought of escape, so she gave a resigned sigh.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundred-and-ninetieth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

ROSELEAF DRESSED the princess in a magnificent robe and served her with food, making every effort the while to dispel her grief. The fair Splendour was a little consoled, and said: "I see that it was written in my destiny that I should be separated from my father and the land of my birth. I must submit to the decrees of Fate." Roseleaf kept her strenuously in this way of thinking until her tears were dry; then she ran to Hassan and said to him: "Go to your beloved at once, for the moment is propitious. When you enter the chamber, first kiss her feet and then her hands and then her head. Do not speak until that is done and, when you venture upon words, let them be eloquent and very kind." Trembling with love, Hassan presented himself before the princess, who looked closely upon him and felt her heart much softened by his beauty. Nevertheless she lowered her glance, while Hassan kissed her feet and hands and then between her eyes. "O queen of all beauty," he said, "O life of life, eyes' joy and garden of the spirit, O my princess, if you pity me at all, calm your heart and cool your eyes; for your lot shall be a happy one. Just as my sister is your servant, so I have no will or wish to be other than your slave. I had no thought of violating you, but wish to marry you according to the law of Allah and His Prophet. I will take you to Baghdad, the city of my birth, and there buy for

you slaves of both sexes and a home worthy of your magnificence. Ah, if you knew in what delightful ground rises the City of Peace; how amiable and polished her citizens, how delightful and propitious their address! I have a mother who is the best woman in the world, and she will love you as a daughter; she will make you extraordinary dishes, for in all the land of Irak there is no better cook."

Thus spake Hassan to the girl Splendour, daughter of the king of all the Jinn; but the princess did not answer by word or letter or sign. Suddenly there came a knocking at the palace door and Hassan, whose business it was to open, excused himself from the princess, and ran to the entrance, where he found that the six other sisters had come back from hunting. When they saw his cheeks new-coloured and his body returned to health, they rejoiced exceedingly; but Hassan, instead of telling them about Princess Splendour, helped them to carry their game: the gazelles which they had killed, the foxes, hares, buffaloes, and other wild beasts. He was very friendly with them, kissing them on the brow in turn, laughing with them and showing his pleasure in their coming with an effusion to which they were not accustomed, since they knew that he kept all his kisses for Roseleaf. They were agreeably surprised by this change and the eldest went so far as to suspect that his transports must have an unknown cause; she smiled at him slyly, and said with a wink: "Until today, Hassan, you accepted our caresses without wishing to return them; therefore this demonstration surprises us. Is it that you find us more beautiful in our hunting robes, is it that you have suddenly learned to love us, or is it both?" Hassan lowered his eyes and sighed to break the hardest heart, so that the princesses asked:

"Why do you sigh so heavily, dear brother? Do you wish to return to your mother, your native land? Open your heart to your sisters, Hassan!" But the youth turned to Roseleaf, who had just come up, and, with a blush, begged her to speak for him. Then said Roseleaf: "It is nothing at all, my sisters. My brother has caught a beautiful bird and wishes you to help him tame it." "That is certainly nothing!" cried the sisters, "Why does Hassan blush for a thing like that?" "Because Hassan loves the bird; and, ah, with what a love!" she replied; and the sisters exclaimed: "But, Hassan, how, in Allah's name, can you show your love for a bird?" As Hassan still looked at the ground and blushed, Roseleaf replied again: "With the word and the gesture and the act which comes after." "It must be a very big bird, then!" said they. "It is about our size," said she, "But hear me further: the human intelligence is very limited. Thus it was that, when we left our poor Hassan alone, he wandered in grief through the palace and his soul was so upset that he mistook the keys and, quite by accident, opened the forbidden door and found the terrace. There such and such a thing befell him." She told the whole story of Hassan's love, making it appear that he was in no wise to blame, and added: "In any case our brother is to be excused, for the girl is beautiful. If you but knew how beautiful she is!"

Then said the sisters: "If she is as beautiful as you say, describe her to us." "Describe her!" cried Roseleaf, "By Allah, there is none who could do that! Hairs would grow on my tongue before I could give you a faint image of her charms. But I will try, if only to prevent you from falling down flat when you see her!"

“Glory be to Him who clothed her in jasmin nakedness! The balance of her neck and the black fire of her eyes surpass gazelles; her body, the wind-dancing araka; her hair is a winter night; her mouth, a rose sealed with the seal of Sulayman; her teeth are hailstones in the sun. Her neck is a bar of silver; her belly has its dimples and counter-dimples; her buttocks their valleys and stages; her navel could hold an ounce of black musk; her thighs, though heavy and firm, have the resilience of cushions filled with ostrich down. Between these thighs there lies in its warm nest, like a little rabbit without ears, her pretty love tale, with terrace and hollow, hill and vale, and fair regale to banish grief and bale. You would call it a smooth crystal dome or an inverted silver cup. To such a girl these lines are applicable:

*She comes to me dressed in beauty,
A tree in roses;
Her breasts are apples.
Yet her breasts are more than apples,
Her flesh than roses;
For a man may bathe in a bath of roses
And eat of apples.*

“Such, my sisters, is the eye-glance which I had of princess Splendour, daughter of the king of the kings of Jinnistan.”

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundred-and-ninety-first Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THE MARVELLING SISTERS CRIED: "You are right to be snared by such beauty, Hassan! In Allah's name, lead us to her that we may see for ourselves." Certain now that they would be on his side, Hassan conducted them to the pavilion where Splendour was and they kissed the earth between her hands, saying: "O daughter of our king, your adventure with this youth is indeed prodigious; but, we, who here bow before you, can predict nothing but happiness; we assure you that in all your life you will do nought but congratulate yourself on the possession of our brother, on his delightful manners, his deep affection, his skill in everything. Consider, too, that he declared his passion in person, not using a go-between, and asked for nothing unlawful. If we were not certain that girls need men, we would not dare to plead so boldly before our princess. Let us marry you to our brother, and we promise that you will be pleased with him." They waited an answer and, when the fair Splendour said neither yes nor no, Roseleaf went up to her and took one of her hands between her own. "Allow me, dear mistress," she said, and then to Hassan: "Give me your hand." Hassan obeyed and Roseleaf joined the hands of both, saying: "With the leave of Allah and by the law of His Prophet, I pronounce you man and wife!" And Hassan, in an ecstasy of happiness, improvised these lines:

*You are wet with the water of beauty,
A half of your flesh is rubies,*

*The rest is pearls and amber and black musk;
Yet you are all gold.*

*There is none like you
In Allah's garden of dead girls,
So kill me if you wish.*

Hearing these verses, the girls cried out together and, turning to Splendour, exclaimed: "O princess, do you blame us for giving you a youth who can so fairly express himself in verse?" "Is he a poet, then?" asked Splendour; and they answered: "Indeed he is. He composes poems of miraculous facility and extemporises odes with thousands of lines, each imbued with the most lively sentiment." This answer finally won over the bride's heart and she smiled at Hassan under heavy lids; so that he, who had waited for that signal from her eyes, took her in his arms and carried her to his inner chamber. There, with her will, he opened that which there was to open, broke that which there was to break, and unsealed that which was sealed. They sweetly rejoiced together and, in an instant of time, tasted the sum of every joy. Love grew about the heart of Hassan, over-topping all his passions, and every bird of his being broke into song. Now glory be to Allah, who joins His Faithful in delight and does not count the gifts He showers upon them! It is you, O Lord, whom we adore, you upon whom we cry for aid! Lead us into the narrow way, into the path of those who have experienced the mercy of our God; let us not wander into the road of those who are smitten by the anger of the Lord, those who have gone astray!

For forty days and nights Hassan and Splendour lay together upon the pleasant breast of love, and the

seven princesses vied with each other to vary their delights and to make their stay in the palace a thing of wonder. But on the fortieth night Hassan saw his mother in a dream: she upbraided him for forgetfulness and spoke of her eternal tears over the tomb which she had raised in the house at home. He woke sighing and weeping so loud that the seven princesses ran to him and Roseleaf, being more anxious than the others, asked the king's daughter what had happened to her husband. When Splendour answered that she did not know, the youngest princess exclaimed: "I will find out for myself!" and going up to Hassan, asked tenderly: "What is the matter, my lamb?" Hassan's tears fell more heavily at first; but in the end he sorrowfully told his dream.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundred-and-ninety-second Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THEN IT WAS Roseleaf's turn to weep and groan, while her sisters said to Hassan: "We may not keep you here any longer or prevent you from returning to your mother; but we beg you not to forget us and to promise that you will visit us once a year." His little sister, Roseleaf, threw herself sobbing upon his neck and then swooned for very grief. When she came to herself, she sadly recited verses of farewell and, bowing her head to her knees, refused all consolation. Therefore, while the other sisters made preparations for the journey, Hassan kissed and petted

her who loved him most, solemnly swearing to return to her once every year. When all was ready, the girls asked Hassan in what way he wished to return to Bassora. Just as he was about to reply that he did not know, he remembered the magic drum which he had taken from Bahram, the drum covered with cock's skin. "Here are the means," he cried, "but I do not know how to use them." Roseleaf dried her tears for a moment and got to her feet, saying: "Dear brother, I will teach you how to use the drum. This is what you must do." And, placing the instrument against her thigh, she made the action of beating upon the skin with her fingers. Hassan took the drum, saying: "I understand," and beat it in the same way, but very strongly. At once, from every point of the compass, sprang towards them great camels, racing dromedaries, mules, and horses, which came together in a galloping tumult and then ranged themselves in a long line, the camels leading.

The seven princesses chose out the best animals and dismissed the rest; on those which they had chosen they loaded costly presents in bales, with garments and provisions; and placed a magnificent double palanquin on the back of a vast racing dromedary. Then the farewells began, the dolorous farewells! Poor Roseleaf, how sad you were, how multitudinous your tears! Your sister heart broke when Hassan departed with the king's daughter, and you moaned like a dove torn from its mate. Tender Roseleaf, you did not know the full bitterness of the cup, or that your pitiful provision of Hassan's happiness should so soon be the cause of separation. But calm your dear spirit and refresh your eyes, for you shall see him again! Your cheeks, which were roses, seem now pomegranate flowers because of your weep-

ing; therefore do not weep, but calm your dear spirit and refresh your eyes. You will see Hassan again, for that is written in your destiny.

The caravan set forth amid tearing cries of farewell, and disappeared far off, while Roseleaf fell again into her swoon. It overwent mountains and valleys, plains and deserts, with the swiftness of a bird and, by the leave of Allah, came without accident to Bassora. As they halted before the door of his house, Hassan heard his mother groaning and lamenting for the absence of her son, and his eyes filled with tears as he knocked upon the door. In a broken voice the poor old woman asked who was there and, trembling in every limb, opened to them. Though her eyes were weak with tears they recognised her son; she uttered a profound sigh and fell fainting. Hassan and his wife so cared for her that she quickly came to herself. Then Hassan threw his arms about her neck, weeping for joy and kissing her tenderly; after the first transports, he said: "Dear mother, behold my wife, your daughter whom I have brought to serve you!" The old woman looked at Splendour for the first time and her reason fled before the bride's loveliness. "Whoever you may be, my daughter," she cried, "you are very welcome to a house which your face has even now illuminated. . . . What is your wife's name, my son?" When Hassan told her, she exclaimed: "A name which fits! He was well inspired who called you so, O daughter of benediction!" She took her by the hand and sat down beside her on the old carpet of the house, while Hassan told his story in detail from the moment of his sudden disappearance to the time of his return. His mother marvelled beyond the limits of marvel and did not know how sufficiently to honour the daughter of the king of the kings of Jinnistan.

To begin with, she hastened to the market and bought provisions of exquisite quality; then to the silk market and purchased, from the great merchants, the ten most excellent robes they had. These last she carried to Splendour and put the whole ten upon her at the same time, one above another, to show that nothing was too fine for her merit. Then she kissed her as if she had been her own daughter and went to the kitchen, where she prepared extraordinary meats and unparalleled pastries. In serving her she spared no pains or delicate attentions to make her happy. When the meal was finished, she said to her son: "I hardly think that the city of Bassora is worthy of your wife; it would be better for us, in every respect, to take up our abode in Baghdad, the City of Peace, under the protecting wing of the Khalifat, Haroun Al-Rachid. We have suddenly become very rich and I fear that, in Bassora where our poverty is renowned, we will be suspected of having practised alchemy. Let us go as quickly as possible to Baghdad and become known there from the beginning as princes and emirs from a far country." "The idea is a good one," said Hassan; and at once set about selling the house with its furniture. When this business was accomplished, he took the magic drum and beat upon the skin of it.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundred-and-ninety-third Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

AT ONCE FROM the hollow air came great dromedaries and ranged themselves in front of the house.

Hassan and his mother and his wife took all that was best and lightest of those precious things which they had not turned into money, and set off at a gallop upon the beasts, at such a speed that they had reached the gates of Baghdad, on the banks of the Tigris, before you could have distinguished your right hand from your left. Hassan went forward and purchased through a broker, at the price of a hundred thousand dinars, a magnificent palace which had been owned by an important wazir. There he installed his wife and mother and, after furnishing all the chambers with a luxury which was beyond price, he bought a great train of slaves, both men and women, and a sufficiency of lads and eunuchs. So lavishly did he set up his household that his following was the most remarkable in all the city.

Hassan and Splendour lived delicately in the City of Peace, compassed at every turn by the loving attentions of the old woman, who cudgelled her brains each day to confect some new dish or carry out the novel recipes, so different from those of Bassora, which she learnt from her new neighbours. In Baghdad there are many masterpieces of cooking which may be found in no other place upon the earth. After nine months of happiness and chosen food, Hassan's wife gave easy birth to male twins, more beautiful than young moons. Their names were called Nasir and Mansur.

At the end of a year memory came to Hassan of the seven princesses and he recalled his oath. As he had a special longing to see Roseleaf he first made preparation by purchasing the most beautiful stuff and desirable trifles in all the land of Irak, as worthy presents, and then told his mother of his intention. To her he said: "I have one recommendation above all

others to make to you: while I am away, guard the feathery mantle, which belonged to Splendour and which I have hidden in the most secret place of the house, as if it were your life. If my dear wife, by some most unhappy chance, were to see that magic cloak again, her nature, which is the nature of birds, would come back to her and she would fly away from here, even in despite of her own heart. If, dear mother, you let her get sight of it, I shall die of grief or kill myself. . . . Also I beg you to look after her very carefully, for she is delicate and used to petting. Do not scruple to serve her yourself; for servants do not know what is fitting and what is not fitting, what is suitable and what is not suitable; nor can they distinguish the refined thing from the gross. Above all, do not let her set foot outside the house, nor head outside the window, nor mount even upon the terrace of the palace; for I fear the open air for her and the temptations of space. . . . Such are my recommendations, and, if you wish my death, you have but to neglect them." "Allah preserve me from disobeying you, my child!" answered Hassan's mother, "Pray to the Prophet! Have I become imbecile in my old age that I need such a bushel of advice? Depart with an assured heart, Hassan, and, when you return, you can find out from Splendour herself that all has gone as you wish. . . . But I also have a request to make, my child: let not your absence be longer than is necessary for the journey both ways and a short stay with the princesses."

Thus Hassan and his mother spoke together, nor did they know the unknown writing in their book of fate, nor did they know that the fair Splendour had heard their words and laid them up in her memory.

Hassan said farewell to his mother, swearing not

to be away longer than need be, and then kissed his wife and the two boys, Nasir and Mansur, who were sucking at her breasts.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundred-and-ninety-fourth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

HASSAN BEAT UPON the cock-skin drum, and after he had bestridden the resultant dromedary, repeated all his recommendations to his mother and kissed her hand. Then he spoke to the kneeling animal, which at once rose upon his four legs and, giving them to the wind, sped rather through the air than over the earth, until he was but a little speck in the distance.

It would be useless to tell of the great joy which Hassan brought to the seven princesses, and specially to Roseleaf, and how they decked the palace with garlands of flowers and lighted it with coloured lights. Let us leave him telling them the news, and more particularly of the birth of Nasir and Mansur; let us leave him hunting and playing with his sisters. Be so kind, O honourable and generous hearers, to return with me to Hassan's palace in Baghdad, where we have left his old mother and his wife. Accord me this favour, O open-handed lords, and you shall see and hear, with your admirable eyes and honourable ears, that which, in their lives of seeing and hearing upon the earth, they have neither seen nor heard nor suspected. May the blessings and the choice favours of

Allah fall upon you! Now listen carefully, my lords!

O illustrious hearers, for two days after her husband's departure Splendour did not for one moment leave her mother-in-law; but, on the third day, as she kissed the old woman's hand good morning, she said: "Dear mother, I am greatly desirous of going to the hammam, for I have taken no baths while suckling Nasir and Mansur." "As Allah lives, these are unconsidered words, my daughter!" cried Hassan's mother, "Go to the hammam! Oh, sorrow, sorrow! Do you not know that we are strangers here and have no knowledge of the hammams in the city? How can we go without your husband first visiting the place, to retain a room for you and to assure himself that all is clean and that cockroaches and blackbeetles will not fall upon you from the dome? But your husband is absent and I know no one who could take his place in so serious a business; I cannot go with you myself, as I am very old and feeble; but this I will do my dear: I will heat water for you at home and wash your head and give you a delightful bath in our own hammam. I have everything necessary; in fact, the day before yesterday I received a fresh box of scented Aleppo earth, and amber, and depilatory paste, and henna. You can set your heart at rest, all shall be as you desire." But Splendour answered: "O my mistress, since when has hammam permission been refused to wives? If you had said these things even to a slave she would not have suffered them; rather than stay in your house she would have demanded to be sold again. Men are fools to think that all women are alike and that a thousand tyrannical precautions are necessary to prevent them from misbehaving. But you ought to know that, when a woman is resolved upon a thing, she will find her way to it in spite of all, and that noth-

ing can interfere with her plans, however impossible or disastrous. Woe upon my youth! I am suspected and they doubt my chastity! Nothing remains but death!" So saying, she burst into tears and called down black calamities upon her own head.

Hassan's mother was touched in the end by these signs of grief, especially as she realised that nothing would turn Splendour from her purpose. Therefore, in spite of her great age and the express instructions of her son, she prepared perfumes and clean linen for the bath, and saying: "Come, my daughter, you shall have your way, but Allah protect us from the anger of your husband!" led Splendour from the palace and conducted her to the most famous hammam of Baghdad.

Ah, how much better would it have been if Hassan's mother had been stony-hearted and never visited that hammam! Yet who but the Seer may read the future pages of the Book or know what may chance between two steps upon the road? We, here, are Mussulmans; we believe and trust in a Supreme Will. We say: "There is no God but Allah and Muhamad is the Prophet of Allah!" Pray to the Prophet, O Believers, O illustrious audience!

When the fair Splendour entered the Hammam, the women who lay in the great central hall uttered a chorus of admiring cries and were quite ravished by her beauty.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundred-and-ninety-fifth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THEY COULD NOT take their eyes from her and, if their astonishment was great when the girl stood before them in her veils, what was not their fever of delight when she cast them aside and stepped forth naked! O harp of David enchanting the lion Saul; O lover of Antar, the curled warrior, O desert girl, O sweet-thighed virgin Abla, making the tribes of Arabia shock together for love! O Budur, daughter of king Ghayur, whose eyes set fire to the Jinn; O music of water-courses, O Spring singing of birds, what are you before the nakedness of this fawn? Praise be to Allah who created you, O Splendour, and mingled in your body the glory of ruby and musk, the glory of amber and pearls, O all-gold Splendour!

The women left their bathing and their rest to see her better, and followed her about. The fame of her beauty spread from the hammam into all the neighbourhood and, in a moment, the halls were so packed by women wishing to gaze upon that marvel that none might move in them. Among these unknown admirers there happened to be a young slave whose name was Tohfa, belonging to Zobeida, queen of Haroun Al-Rachid. She was more stricken than any by the perfect beauty of this magic moon, and remained with wide eyes in the front rank of those who watched Splendour bathing in the fountain. When the wonderful bath was over and Splendour dressed, the little slave followed her out of the hammam, being drawn almost against her will as by a lodestone, and walked behind the two women until they came to their home.

Not being able to enter after them, little Tohfa had to be content with throwing a rose and a sounding kiss to the object of her admiration; but unhappily the eunuch at the door saw both these things, and, being scandalised, rolled his eyes upon her and made shocking remarks. Therefore she returned, sighing, to the khalifat's palace and ran to her mistress.

When Lady Zobeida saw her favourite slave stand pale and troubled before her, she said: "Where have you come from in such a state, my little one?" "From the hammam," answered Tohfa; and the queen demanded: "What did you see in the hammam that you should come back to me with confused senses and languishing eyes?" "Why should my soul and my eyes not languish, why should my heart not mourn, for her who has stolen away my reason?" cried little Tohfa; but Zobeida laughed, saying: "What are you talking about?" Then cried Tohfa again: "What girl or what damsel, what fawn or what gazelle, can equal her?" "Must I wait all night before you tell me her name, silly Tohfa?" exclaimed the queen; and the slave continued: "I do not know her name; but I swear, by your kindness which is upon my head, that there was, is, and shall be, no creature on the earth to be compared with her. I only know that she lives in a palace on Tigris bank, with one large door facing the city and one the river. They told me at the hammam that she was the wife of a rich merchant, called Hassan of Bassora. O dear mistress, it is not only her beauty which makes me tremble; it is also fear. I think what terrible things might happen if our master, the khalifat, heard tell of her. Surely he would have her husband killed and marry my miracle, in spite of all the laws of righteousness. He would barter the

immortality of his soul for something fair but perishable."

Zobeida knew that her little slave was usually most wise and measured in her speech; therefore she was the more surprised to hear her, and said: "Are you sure that you did not dream this marvel?" But Tohfa answered: "I swear by my head and by the weight of my obligations to you, dear mistress, that I threw a rose and a kiss after her when she entered her palace. I swear that the sun which shines over Arabia and upon the Turk and lights the people of Persia, never brought forth her parallel." Then cried Zobeida: "By the life of the Immaculates, my ancestors, I must test this unique jewel for myself."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundred-and-ninety-sixth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

SHE CALLED MASRUR, the sword-bearer, and said to him: "Go at once to that palace which has two doors, one giving on the Tigris and one on the city, and, if you value your head, bring me the girl who lives there." Masrur leapt from the presence and, running to Hassan's palace, brushed past the eunuch, who bowed to the earth before him, and came panting to the second door. The old woman answered his knocking and Masrur, wishing her peace, entered the vestibule. "What do you wish?" asked Hassan's mother; and he replied: "I am Masrur the sword-bearer. I

am sent by our most gracious lady, Zobeida, daughter of Al-Kassim, wife of the emir Haroun Al-Rachid, sixth in line from Al-Abbas, uncle of the Prophet (upon whom be the peace and blessing of Allah!). I come to fetch the fair girl, who lives here, into the presence of my mistress." Hassan's mother trembled in terror, crying: "O Masrur, we are strangers here and my son is upon a journey. Before he left he expressly forbade me to allow his wife to leave the house, either with myself or another, and under any pretext however grave. I fear that, if she goes out again, her beauty will bring about some deadly happening and my son will kill himself. O good and pleasant Masrur, we beg you to have pity on our distress and not to ask us a thing which is beyond our will and power." "Do not be afraid, good lady," answered Masrur, "no harm will come to the girl. My mistress simply wants to see her, to be sure that the reports of her splendid beauty have not been exaggerated. It is not the first time that I have undertaken such a charge and I can assure you that neither your daughter-in-law nor yourself will have reason to regret that you obeyed me. I promise to take her in safety and to bring her back in safety."

When Hassan's mother saw that all resistance would be useless and even harmful, she left Masrur where he stood and, hastening to her daughter-in-law, dressed her and little Nasir and Mansur in their finest garments. Then, taking the children in her arms, she conducted Splendour into the presence of Masrur, who led them all from the palace in the following order: first, the sword-bearer himself to clear the way, then the old woman carrying the children, and then Splendour, completely covered by her veils. On arriving at the khalifat's palace, the two women

were led into the presence of Zobeida, who sat at ease upon a broad low throne, surrounded by her women and her favourites. Little Tohfa was in the first rank of the latter.

Handing the two infants to Splendour, Hassan's mother kissed the earth between the throne and made her compliment. Zobeida stretched forth her hand to be kissed and bade the old woman rise. Then she turned to Splendour, saying: "O welcome child, there are no men here; why do you not take off your veils?" At the same time she signed to Tohfa who went up to the stranger with a blush and began by touching the fringe of her garment. She carried the fingers which had touched it to her lips and brow, before helping Splendour to throw aside her great veil and lift the little gauze from before her face.

O Splendour, neither the moon which comes out at her full from behind a white cloud, nor the sun in his noon glory, nor the gentle dancing of a branch in the warm Spring, nor the breeze at dusk, nor laughing water, nor all that a man may see and hear and so be driven mad, can ravish like the first glance cast upon you! The rays of your beauty shone into the dark corners of the palace and, for sheer joy, the hearts of your beholders danced, like young lambs, within their breasts. Sweet folly breathed upon their brows, and the slaves whispered: "O Splendour!" But we, good hearers, we say: "Glory be to Him who made the body of woman to be like the lily of the valley and to give His Faithful a sign and foretaste of Paradise!"

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundred-and-ninety-seventh Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

WHEN ZOBEIDA came out a little from her sweet surprise, she rose from her throne and threw her arms about Splendour's neck; she drew her to her breast, kissing her between the eyes. She made her sit by her upon the throne and put round her neck a collar of ten strings of large pearls, which she had carried since her marriage with Al-Rachid. "O sovereign of enchantments," she said, "my little slave made a mistake when she tried to speak of your beauty, for it is for ever beyond the flight of words. But tell me, do you know how to sing, or dance, or play? Surely it must be so; for one like you would excel in everything." But Splendour answered: "Indeed, dear mistress, I cannot sing, or dance, or play the lute, I have no excellence in those arts which are common with young women. But I possess one talent which might seem marvellous to you: I can fly in the air like a bird."

"An enchantment! A miracle!" cried all the women; and Zobeida said: "Yet there is nothing astonishing in the matter, O charming one; for you are already more harmonious than a swan and lighter to our seeing than any bird. Yet, if you would carry our souls behind you, I pray you try over one of these wingless flights for us." "Indeed, I have wings, lady," answered Splendour, "but they are not with me. Yet you have only to ask my husband's mother to bring me my mantle of feathers."

The queen turned to the old woman, saying: "O venerable mother, will you fetch this mantle of feath-

ers, that we may see the charming girl make use of it?" "Now we are lost!" said the mother-in-law to herself, "The sight of her mantle will recall her aerial instincts and Allah alone knows what will happen!" In a trembling voice, she answered: "My child is troubled by the majesty of your presence and does not know what she is saying. Has anyone ever worn feathers? Such a dress would be only decent for birds." But Splendour interrupted: "I swear by your life, O queen, that my plumes are shut in a hidden coffer somewhere about our dwelling." Zobeida took a costly bracelet, worth all the treasures of the kings of the earth, and handed it to the old woman, saying: "Dear mother, I conjure you to fetch the mantle. I will look at it just once and then you can have it back." But, when the old woman still swore that she knew nothing of any mantle of feathers, Zobeida called Masrur to her and bade him hunt throughout Hassan's palace until the plumes were found. Masrur forced the mother-in-law to give him the keys and made a thorough search of the palace until he found the feather mantle in a box hidden below the ground. He brought the garment to Zobeida, and the queen, after surprised examination of the art with which it was made, handed it to the fair Splendour.

Splendour looked over the cloak, feather by feather, and, when she had satisfied herself that it was exactly as Hassan had taken it from her, spread it out and, entering, pulled the two folds across her breast. She stood in the presence like a large white bird, and, to the great wonder of all, made a trial glide to the end of the hall and back again, without touching the floor; finally she balanced on her wings up to the ceiling. She descended as light as a puff of air and, taking up

the two infants, set them one on each of her shoulders. "I see that my flying pleases you," she said, "I will try to do better." She sprang up and lighted upon the sill of the high window. "Listen to me, for I am leaving you," she cried; and Zobeida called to her sorrowfully: "Would you leave us, Splendour? Would you cheat us of your beauty already?" "Alas, I go," answered Splendour, "and that which goes does not return." Then to the poor old woman, who had fallen weeping upon the carpet, she continued mournfully: "O mother of Hassan, I grieve to go. I mourn for you and for your son. This separation will tear your hearts and blacken your days, but I can do nothing. The drunkenness of the air is upon me and I must fly. Yet, if your son would find me again, he has but to search for me in the isles of Wak-Wak. Farewell, O mother of Hassan!" So saying, Splendour flew out into the air and, after poising for a moment on the palace dome to smooth her plumes, sprang up and disappeared among the clouds with the two children.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundred-and-ninety-eighth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

HASSAN'S UNFORTUNATE MOTHER lay motionless upon the floor and like to die of grief; Zobeida leaned over her and, after having brought her to herself a little with the caress of her own hand, said to her: "Ah, my mother, instead of denying all, why did you not

warn us that Splendour might make such use of her enchanted garment? I would not have put it into her power; but how was I to know that your son had married one from among the flying Jinn? Pardon my ignorance, good mother, and do not blame me too greatly." "I am the only one to blame," answered the old woman, "nor may the slave pardon her queen. Each carries his destiny about his neck and that of my son and of myself is to die of grieving." With these words she went out from the palace, out from among the tears of the women, and dragged herself to her own house. There she sought for the little children and found them not; there she sought for her son's wife and found her not. Then her tears washed her away from life and near to the grave; and she built three tombs in the house, one large and two small, near which she passed her days and nights in moaning. These lines and many others she murmured with a breaking heart:

*My sigh for the lack of the smiles of the children
Is an old branch in the rains,
For my tears were the children and passed with
the Springtime,
Yet the old branch remains
And my tears are the souls of the tears of the
children
And the old branch remains.*

So much for her. . . . When Hassan had spent three months with the seven princesses, he decided to leave them in order that his mother and wife should not be disquieted. He therefore beat the cock-skin drum and, when the dromedaries appeared, chose ten and sent away the others. The sisters loaded five with

bars of gold and silver, and five with precious stones; then they made Hassan promise to return again at the end of another year, and set about their farewells. They kissed him, one after the other, and each addressed him in some tender poem, while all, balancing with their hips, marked the rhythm of the verses. Hassan answered with this improvisation:

*The gift of pearls before we parted,
Since stirruped feet must ride,
The gift of a ruby rosy-hearted:
These gifts would not abide,
For my eyes were dim where the pearls had started
And the ruby was from my side.*

Then Hassan departed on his dromedary, at the head of the convoy, and came without accident to Baghdad, the City of Peace.

When he entered his house he could hardly recognise his mother, for tears, fasting, and vigil had changed her so. "Where is my wife, where are my children?" he asked, as these did not run to greet him; but the old woman could only answer with her sobs. Then Hassan ran like a madman through the rooms until he saw the chest in which he had kept the magic cloak, open and empty. He turned and saw three tombs; he fell all along with his forehead upon the stone of the greatest, and knew no more. In spite of his mother's cares he lay in his swoon from morning until the night; and when at last he came to himself it was only to tear his garments and cover his head with ashes and dust. Suddenly he cast himself upon his sword and would have run it through his heart; but the old woman came between with outstretched arms and took his head upon her breast;

also, she made him sit down, when for very despair he would have rolled like a snake upon the earth. Little by little she told him all that had passed during his absence, and concluded thus: "So you see, my son, in spite of the magnitude of our misfortune, there is still room for a little hope, since you may find your wife in the islands of Wak-Wak."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Five-hundred-and-ninety-ninth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

HASSAN FELT THIS sudden hope refresh the fans of his spirit and he rose, saying to his mother: "I go to the islands of Wak-Wak." But then he thought: "Where can they be, these islands whose name is like the crying of a bird of prey? Are they in the seas of India or Sind, in the seas of Persia or China?" In order to find out, he left the house, although life seemed black and aimless to him, and, seeking out the wise men of the khalifat's court, asked them, one after another, in what seas those isles might be. But each one answered: "We do not know. We have never heard tell of them." So Hassan despaired again and returned to the house with the wind of death playing about his heart. As he relapsed to earth, he said to his mother: "It is not to the isles of Wak-Wak that I go, but to those isles where the mother of vultures, which is death, has pitched her tent." For a little he lay weeping into the carpets; but suddenly he sprang to his feet again, saying: "Allah has sent me inspi-

ration: I will return to the seven princesses who call me brother and ask them the road to the isles of Wak-Wak." Without delaying an hour, he mingled his tears with his mother's in farewell and, mounting his dromedary, which he had not yet sent back into the void, arrived in time at the palace of the seven sisters on Cloud Mountain.

The sisters received him with the liveliest joy and kissed him with cries of welcome; but, when it was Roseleaf's turn to embrace her brother, her more loving heart perceived the trouble of his soul, and, without speaking, she wept upon his shoulder. "Roseleaf, my sister," said Hassan, "I suffer most cruelly and have come to seek the sole remedy for my grief. O perfumes of Splendour, the light winds shall never again bring you to refresh my soul!" Then Hassan uttered a great cry and fell down in a swoon.

The frightened princesses ran to him and Roseleaf sprinkled his face with rose-water and her tears. Seven times Hassan tried to rise and seven times fell back again; when at last he could open his eyes, he told his sisters the whole sad story, concluding in this wise: "I have come to ask you the road to the islands of Wak-Wak; for, when my wife went away she told my mother that I would find her there."

Hassan's sisters lowered their heads, as if in a stupor at what they had heard, and looked at each other a long time in silence. At last they cried all together: "Lift your hand to the vault of heaven, O Hassan; touch the vault of heaven with your hand! That would be easier than to come to the islands of Wak-Wak." At this answer Hassan's tears fell like a river and wetted his garments: so that the princesses tried to comfort him. Roseleaf tenderly put her arms about his neck and kissed him, saying: "Refresh your

eyes and calm your dear spirit, my brother, and then take hold upon patience; for the Master of Proverbs has said that patience is the key of consolation and that consolation wins at last to the goal. Destiny must run its course and he who has ten years to live shall in no wise die during the ninth year. Dry your tears and be strong; for I will do all in my power to bring you to your wife and children, if it be Allah's will that you should see them again. Oh, that cursed cloak of feathers! I often thought to beg you to burn it, but each time checked myself for fear of angering you. That which is written is written; now it is for us to try to find a cure for that part of your evil which is curable." When she had said this, she threw herself at her sisters' feet and prayed them to join with her in finding a way to the islands of Wak-Wak. And the sisters promised with all their heart to help her.

Now the seven princesses had an uncle who specially favoured the eldest of them and came regularly to see her once a year.

At this point Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Six-hundredth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THIS UNCLE'S NAME WAS Abd Al-Kaddus. On his last visit he had given his favourite niece a little bag full of an aromatic substance, bidding her burn a little if she ever needed his help. So, when Roseleaf begged aid from her sisters, the eldest said to her: "Run and bring me the bag of scent and the gold brazier."

Roseleaf fetched these things and her sister burnt a pinch of the perfume on the coals of the brazier, thinking upon her uncle as she did so.

The smoke of the brazier gave place to a whirlwind of dust and from this appeared the sheikh Abd Al-Kaddus, mounted upon a snow-white elephant. "Here I am," said he, as he dismounted, "Did I not smell an odour of burning scent? How can I help you, my child?" The eldest princess threw her arms about his neck, as she answered: "It is more than a year since we saw you, uncle dear; that is why I burnt the perfume." "You are the most charming of my nieces," said the old man, "I had not forgotten you and was coming tomorrow. But hide nothing from me, for I am sure you wish to ask me something." "Allah guard you and prolong your days!" replied the girl, "Since you permit it, I will ask you something." "I grant it in advance," said the old man; and at once the princess told the whole story of Hassan, and added: "I beg you to tell our brother how he may come to the islands of Wak-Wak."

The sheikh Abd Al-Kaddus lowered his head and put his finger in his mouth; after an hour's deep reflection, he took his finger out of his mouth and raised his head; then, still without speaking, he drew complicated figures in the sand. At last he shook his head, saying: "Tell your brother that he torments himself uselessly. It is impossible for him to reach the islands of Wak-Wak." The princess turned in tears to Hassan, crying: "Alas, alas!" but Roseleaf took him by the hand and led him up to the old man. "Dear uncle," she said, "let him see proof of what you have told us and give him your sage counsel." The old man presented his hand to be kissed by Hassan, and addressed him thus: "My son, you torment yourself uselessly;

you could not reach the islands of Wak-Wak even if you had the help of the winged cavalry of the Jinn, of wandering comets, and all turning stars. These islands are inhabited by virgin Amazons; and the father of your wife, king over all the kings of Jinnistan, dwells there in untroubled peace. Between you and his islands are seven vast seas, seven bottomless valleys, and seven topless mountains; they lie on the extreme boundaries of earth and beyond them is nothing. I do not think that you could by any means overcome the obstacles which I have mentioned; and I therefore counsel you to return to your own place or stay here with your charming sisters. Think no more of the islands of Wak-Wak."

Hassan became as yellow as saffron and fell to the earth with a great cry; the princesses could not refrain their sobs and the youngest, tearing her garments, laid hands upon her own face. When Hassan came to himself, he could but lie weeping, with his head on Roseleaf's knee; so that the old man pitied him at last and, turning to the princesses, who were wailing lamentably, cried out gruffly to them: "Be quiet!" The princesses checked the crying in their throats and anxiously waited for their uncle to speak. The sheikh Al-Kaddus laid his hand kindly on Hassan's shoulder, saying: "Cease from weeping, my son, and pluck up your courage; for, with Allah's help, I may be able to put a better complexion on this business of yours. Rise up now and follow me."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Six-hundred-and-first Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

HASSAN FELT LIFE come back to him; he jumped to his feet and bade a rapid farewell to his sisters, kissing Roseleaf many times. Then he said humbly to the old man: "I am your slave."

The sheikh Abd Al-Kaddus took Hassan up behind him on the white elephant and spoke some words into the ear of the mighty beast. At once the elephant lifted its legs to the wind and, as swift as falling hail, as striking thunder, as bright lightning, threw itself through the plains of the air, annihilating all distance under its feet. In three days and three nights they had covered a distance of seven years and there rose before them a blue mountain of blue peaks, in whose midst was a cavern, barred by a blue steel door. When the old man knocked upon this door, a blue negro came out from it, holding a blue sabre and a blue metal shield. The sheikh snatched these arms away with incredible swiftness, and the man drew back to let him pass; the two entered the cavern and the blue negro shut the door behind them.

They walked for a mile along a high vaulted gallery, hewn from blue transparent rock and where the light was blue; and, at the end of it, were faced by two enormous gates of gold. Abd Al-Kaddus opened one of these doors and disappeared through it, bidding Hassan wait for him; at the end of an hour he reappeared, leading a blue horse, saddled and bridled in blue, upon which he mounted Hassan. Then he opened the second gold door, and before their eyes stretched

out the blue immensity of space and below their feet a boundless meadowland. "My son," said the old man, "is your mind made up to conform the numberless dangers which await you? Would you not rather return to the seven princesses and let them console you?" But Hassan answered: "I would rather brave the danger of death a thousand times than suffer the torment of this distance." Then said the sheikh again: "My son, have you no mother for whom your absence will be an inexhaustible river of tears? Would you not rather return and console her?" But Hassan answered: "I will never return to my mother without my wife and children." Abd Al-Kaddus urged him no more; but, instead, handed him a letter, on which was written in blue ink: "To the very illustrious, to the very glorious sheikh of sheikhs, our master, the Venerable Father-of-Feathers." Then he said: "So be it, Hassan; depart under the protection of Allaḥ! Take this letter and leave your direction to the horse. He will come to a black mountain of black peaks and set you down before a black cave. When you have dismounted, you must fasten his bridle to the saddle and let him go alone into the cavern. Wait at the door and an old black man will come out to you, dressed in black and black in everything, except for a long white beard which falls to his knees. Kiss his hand and place a corner of his robe over your head; then give him this letter, which is an introduction. He is none other than the Father-of-Feathers, my master and the crown of my head. He alone of all men can help you in your rash endeavour; therefore you must try to win his good graces and must be careful to do everything he says. Allaḥ be with you!"

When Hassan had taken leave of the sheikh Abd Al-

Kaddus, the blue horse neighed and shot into the air like an arrow, while the old man returned to the blue cave.

For ten days Hassan gave the horse its head and it raced the birds and the tempest without a pause, going on in a straight line over a ten years' distance. It came at last to the foot of a chain of black mountains, stretching from west to east, and halted with a whinny of satisfaction.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Six-hundred-and-second Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

IMMEDIATELY BLACK HORSES, as many as rain drops, ran up to them from every side and began to smell at the blue horse and rub themselves against it. Hassan was afraid of their number lest they should wish to bar his path; but the blue horse went on until it came to a black cave among rocks blacker than the wings of night. Hassan dismounted and, after fastening the beast's bridle to the saddle-horn, let it go alone into the cave, while he sat down at the entrance.

He had not waited more than an hour when a venerable old man came out of the cave. He was dressed in black and was himself black, except for a long white beard which fell below his waist. This was the sheikh of sheikhs, the very glorious Ali, Father-of-Feathers, son of Queen Balkis, wife of Sulayman (the peace and blessing of Allah be upon them both!). Hassan knelt before him and kissed his hands and feet. Then, plac-

ing his head beneath the skirt of the old man's robe, he handed him the letter from Abd Al-Kaddus. The Father-of-Feathers took the letter without words and returned into the cave. Hassan was beginning to despair when the old man came again, this time robed entirely in white. He signed to Hassan to follow him and led him through the cave into a great square hall, paved with diamond, in the four corners of which sat upon carpets four old men dressed in black, each surrounded by an infinite number of manuscripts. A gold perfume brazier burned before each, and about him were seven other sages, his disciples, who wrote upon parchment, or read, or reflected. But when the Father-of-Feathers came in, all these venerable scholars stood up and the four chief sages, leaving their corners, came to sit by him in the middle of the hall. When they had taken their places, the sheikh Ali bade Hassan tell his story to this assembled wisdom.

Hassan at first shed tears in torrents; but, at length, he was able to overcome his sobbing and tell his tale from the moment of his abduction by Bahram, the Fire-worshipper, to the time of his meeting with Abd Al-Kaddus, follower of the Father-of-Feathers, and uncle of the seven princesses. The wise men listened without interruption; but, when he had finished, cried out together to their master: "O venerable son of Queen Balkis, this young man is worthy of pity; for he suffers both as a husband and as a father. Perhaps we may be able to help him to find his beautiful wife and two fair children." "Wise brothers," answered the sheikh Ali, "the thing will not be easy. You know how difficult it is for any to reach the islands of Wak-Wak, and how much more difficult the return from them. You know the supreme difficulty, also, of approaching the virgin amazons who guard the king and

his daughters in those isles. How then do you expect this Hassan to win to the presence of Princess Splendour?" "You are right, venerable father," said the scholars, "but you must remember that this young man has been particularly recommended to us by our brother, the honourable and industrious Abd Al-Kad-dus, and that therefore we are in duty bound to favour his projects."

Hassan threw himself at the old man's feet and covered his head with the skirt of the white garment; then he embraced his knees and besought him to give back his wife and children. Also he kissed the hands of the other old men, who joined in his prayers for succour. At last the Father-of-Feathers said: "As Allah lives, never in all my days have I seen a young man so set upon throwing away his life. His rashness blinds him to the enormity of his desire; but I am willing to do all I can to help him."

The sheikh Ali reflected for an hour, amid the respectful silence of his old disciples, and then said: "First of all, I will give you something to protect you in case of danger." He plucked a tuft of hairs from the longest part of his beard and gave them to Hassan, saying: "If you find yourself in peril, burn one of these hairs and I will come instantly to your aid."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Six-hundred-and-third Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THE OLD MAN raised his head towards the dome of the hall and clapped his hands together as if to sum-

mon someone. An Ifrit came down immediately through the dome and stood before the sheikh, who said to him: "What is your name, O Ifrit?" "I am Dahnash bin Farktash, your slave, O Father-of-Feathers," answered the Jinni. Ali whispered something in the monster's ear and then turned to Hassan, saying: "Climb on the back of this Ifrit, my son. He will carry you above the clouds and set you down upon a land of white camphor. There he will leave you, as he is not allowed to proceed further, and you must walk alone across that camphor plain; for, at the end of it, you will be opposite the islands of Wak-Wak. Allah will then provide!"

Hassan again kissed the wise man's hand, gave thankful farewell to the other scholars, and mounted astride the shoulders of Dahnash, who rose with him through the roof of the cave. After a swift journey through the cloud land, Hassan was set gently down upon a region of white camphor and left by the Ifrit to continue his journey alone.

And now, O Hassan, O youth of Bassora, O admiration of the markets in that city, breaker of hearts and destroyer of beholders, O you who lived in all happiness among the princesses, raising such tender grief within their souls: now Hassan, urged by your love for Splendour, you have come upon the wings of an Ifrit to a land of white camphor, where you shall meet with adventures such as no other has encountered upon the earth before!

Hassan walked straight before him across a glittering and scented plain, until he saw far off the appearance of a tent in the camphor desert. As he came near it, he tripped over something concealed in the high grass and, looking down, saw it was a body as white as silver and as great as one of the columns of Iram.

Hassan had tripped over a giant and that which he had taken for a tent was the giant's ear, shading his head from the sun. The monster, roused out of his sleep, got to his feet bellowing, and his anger was so great that he swelled his belly with breath until his bottom groaned with the effort: then a remarkable series of farts rolled forth like thunder, so that Hassan was first thrown to the earth and then shot up into the air again, his eyes hanging out from terror. Before he could strike the earth a second time, the giant caught him by the neck and held him aloft, like a sparrow in the clutches of a falcon. Then he swung him round and round at the length of his arm, preparing to smash him against the earth.

Hassan struggled with all his might, and cried: "Who will save me, who will save me? Have pity, O giant!" The giant heard these cries and said: "As Allah lives, this little bird does not sing badly. I like its twittering. I will take it to the king." He lifted Hassan delicately by one leg and strode off through a thick forest until he came to a clearing, where the king of the giants of that land sat upon a rock, surrounded by a body-guard of fifty monsters fifty cubits high. Hassan's captor approached the king, saying: "O king, here is a little bird which I caught by the foot and have brought to you because of its delightful singing. It twitters most pleasantly." Then he gave Hassan little dabs on the nose, and exclaimed: "Sing, sing, little bird." Hassan, who did not understand the giant's language, thought that his last hour had come; therefore he began to struggle, crying: "Who will save me? Who will deliver me?" The king was convulsed with joy, and said to the giant: "As Allah lives, it is charming! You must take it to my daughter at once. Put it in a cage and hang it near the bed

in her room, so that its singing and twittering may delight her."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Six-hundred-and-fourth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THE GIANT PUT Hassan in a cage, with a large glass for food and a large glass for water, and two perches that he might jump from one to the other and sing: then he carried the cage into the chamber of the giant princess and hung it at her bed's head.

As soon as the king's daughter saw Hassan, she was delighted by his pretty face and form, and began at once to caress and spoil him in a thousand ways; she spoke sweetly in order to tame him. Though Hassan did not understand what she said, when he saw that she did not wish him any harm, he tried by sighs and groans to soften her heart towards him; but the princess took these sounds for harmonious singing, and was delighted. In the end she felt so great an inclination for her pet that she could not bear to be separated from him by night or by day, and felt all her being thrown into a turmoil when he was by. And yet she did not understand how her feelings might be put into action with so small a bird; she spoke to him by signs, but he also did not understand and was far from guessing that anything might happen with this charming but gigantic girl.

One day the princess took Hassan from his cage to clean him and change his garments and, when she had

undressed him, made the prodigious discovery that he was not altogether lacking in that thing which distinguished the male giants; though in his case, of course, it seemed to her extremely small. "By Allah, I have never seen a bird with a thing like that before!" she said to herself; and began to manipulate and examine Hassan in every way, marvelling at each fresh discovery. As Hassan lay in her hands like a sparrow in the grasp of a fowler, the young giantess noticed that his cucumber was changing to a marrow under her fingers and laughed so heartily that she fell over on her side. "What an extraordinary bird!" she cried, "He sings like a bird and yet he pays his compliment to women as politely as if he were a giant!" Feeling that one good turn deserved another, she took him all against her and caressed him in every way as if he had been a man, exciting him with loving gestures until he behaved with her exactly as a sparrow with its mate. From that moment Hassan became the princess's cock in very truth.

Although Hassan was spoiled and petted, and experienced things pleasing enough among the sumptuous charms of this gigantic princess, in spite of the pleasure which he gave her and in spite of the comfort of the cage in which the princess shut him up each time that she had done her business with him, in spite of these and other things, Hassan never for a moment forgot his wife Splendour, daughter of the king of the kings of Jinnistan, or for a moment lost sight of the object of his journey, the islands of Wak-Wak. He would have been very glad to use his magic drum and the tuft of hairs; but his mistress had taken away these precious things when she had changed his clothes; and every time he sighed or gestured that he wished them to be returned to him, she thought that he

was asking her to couple with him. Thus it was that each time he demanded his drum, he was answered with coupling; and each time he prayed for his tuft of hairs the result was coupling. After a few days he was in such a state that he did not dare to make the least sign of any sort, lest the giantess should terribly misunderstand him.

Hassan grew weak and yellow in his cage until one day the giantess, after a more than usual multiplication of caresses, fell back in an ecstasy while he was still against her, and loosed her hold of him. Immediately Hassan rushed to the chest in which his belongings had been placed and, taking the tuft of hairs, burnt one of them while he called silently upon the Father-of-Feathers.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Six-hundred-and-fifth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THE PALACE TREMBLED and the old man came up out of the ground, dressed all in black. "What do you want, Hassan?" he asked, as the youth clutched at his knees. "For pity's sake, do not make a noise, or you will wake her," cried Hassan, "and then I shall have to be her bird again!" The sheikh took him by the hand and, by virtue of his hidden power, led him invisible from the palace. Then he asked what had happened and Hassan told him of his adventures in the camphor land. "And now," he concluded, "if I stay one day longer with that giantess my soul will come out through my nose." Then said the old man: "I

warned you; and yet this is only the beginning. And I must tell you, if only as a last attempt to persuade you to return, that my hairs will be of no avail in the isle of Wak-Wak and you will have to rely entirely on yourself." "And yet I must find my wife," answered Hassan, "and I still have this magic drum to help me out of danger." "I recognise it!" exclaimed Ali, looking at the drum. "It used to belong to Bahram, the Fire-worshipper, one of my old disciples; he was the only one who left the way of Allah. This drum will also be useless in Wak-Wak; for there all enchantment ceases save that of the king." Then said Hassan: "He who is to live ten years will not die during the ninth year. If I am fated to perish in those islands, so be it. Therefore I pray you, O venerable sheikh of sheikhs, to tell me the road which I must follow." For sole response the Father-of-Feathers took him by the hand, bidding him first shut his eyes and then open them. When Hassan had obeyed both commands, behold! there was no longer any Father-of-Feathers, any palace or camphor land; he stood alone on the shore of an island, whose beach was of many-coloured jewels.

He hardly had time to give one look about him before there came out of the racks and spray band after band of vast white birds, which flew towards him, shutting out the sun with their wings. He was soon surrounded by a whirlwind of beating feathers and menacing beaks, and heard "Wak-Wak!" repeated a thousand times by the throats which compassed him. Then he understood that he had come to the forbidden land, and to escape from the birds who would have thrust him back into the sea, ran to take refuge in a little hut, which happily was not far off upon the beach.

As he sat considering his position, the earth groaned and trembled beneath his feet, and, looking forth with bated breath, he saw another cloud, a cloud of dust, sweeping upon him; and out of that cloud lanceheads and helmets and sun-kissed armour dazzled his eyes.

The Amazons! Whither should he fly? On they came and on, as quick as falling hail, as swiftly terrible as lightning, and, in a moment, he was faced by a moving and formidable square of women warriors, mounted on wild gold horses, long-tailed and mighty limbed, with free tossing heads and movements quicker than the north wind across a stormy sea. Each of the women riders had a sword at her side, a long lance at rest on one arm, and a clutch of terrible weapons in the other; held beneath her thighs, each bore four awfully headed javelins.

When the warriors saw Hassan standing at the door of the hut, they pulled in their striving horses, and the hoofs of that check sent the stones of the beach high in the air so that they came down and buried themselves deep in the sand. Both steeds and riders snuffed the tainted wind; the girls' faces showed like moons beneath their helmets, their round heavy buttocks were all of a piece with the tawny rumps of the horses, and their long hair, brown or gold or flame or black, mingled with the mighty tails and manes. Steel head-pieces and emerald breast-plates burnt in one flame together beneath the sun.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Six-hundred-and-sixth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

OUT OF THIS square of light an Amazon taller than the rest advanced towards Hassan and halted within a few paces of where he stood. Her face was completely covered by the vizor of her helmet and her great breasts moved beneath a coat of gold mail, more closely knit than a locust's wings. Hassan threw himself in the dust before her and then lifted his head, saying: "O queen, I am a stranger sent by Fate to this island; I claim the protection of Allah and of you. Do not repulse me, but rather have pity on an unhappy man who seeks for his wife and children!"

The rider leapt from her horse and dismissed her troop with a wave of the hand; then she approached so that Hassan might kiss her feet and hands and carry the hem of her cloak to his forehead. She looked at him closely and then raised her vizor; Hassan gave a great cry and recoiled in fear, for he saw no delightful amazon, but an old woman of strange ugliness, whose nose was formed like an artichoke, whose eyebrows pointed the wrong way, whose cheeks were wrinkled and falling, whose eyes glanced and cursed at each other, and in each of the nine angles of whose face was a calamity; which things made her look utterly like a pig. Hassan covered his eyes with his garment that he might no longer look upon her face; but the old woman took this as a great sign of respect and was exceedingly moved by it. "Have no fear, stranger, for I will protect you," she said, "I promise you my help in any need; but, first of all, it is essential that no one should see you; therefore, al-

though I am most impatient to hear your story, I will bring you the clothes of an amazon so that you may be indistinguishable from my virgin warriors." She left him and returned in a short time with a breast-plate, sabre, lance, helmet, and the like, in every way similar to those worn by her followers. When Hassan had disguised himself, she led him by the hand to a rock near the sea and sat down beside him, saying: "Now tell me what has sent you to these islands, which no human before has dared to visit." After expressions of thanks, Hassan replied: "Dear mistress, my tale is the tale of a man who has lost his one treasure and wanders through the earth hoping to find it." Then he told the old amazon the whole story of his adventures. When he had finished, she asked him the names of his wife and children, and he answered: "In my own land the children were called Nasir and Mansur, and my wife Splendour; but I do not know what names they would bear among the Jinn." So saying, he shed abundant tears.

Pity had sway over the old woman, and she said: "O Hassan, I swear that a mother could feel no more for a child than I feel for you. As it seems possible that your wife may be one of my amazons, I will show you all of them naked in the sea tomorrow; I will make them file past you, one by one, so that you may recognise her if she is among the band."

Thus spake old Mother-of-Lances to Hassan of Bassora, comforting him with hopes that her plan might be successful; for the rest of that day she led him about the island, showing him its marvels and, by evening, she loved him with a great love. "Be calm, my child," she said, "for you are in my heart. Even were you to ask for all my warriors, my young virgins, I would give them to you gladly." Then said Hassan:

“Dear mistress, I swear by Allah that I will never leave you until I die.”

Next morning old Mother-of-Lances came down to the sea at the head of her warriors, to the sound of beating drums. Hassan sat on the rock beside the waves and looked, in his disguise, for all the world like some princess.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Six-hundred-and-seventh Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

AT A SIGN from the old woman the girls came down from their horses and out from their armour, tapered and silvered, a fever of lilies and roses; white and lightly they went down into the sea. The foam fell like flower petals upon their hair, free and wantoning, or built high in towers above their brows; the swelling waves imitated the curves of them; they were like sea-flowers budding above the water.

Hassan looked long at this moonlight of faces, midnight of eyes, these hundred tints of hair, this multitudinous benediction of haunches; but in none could he find the incomparable beauty of Splendour. “She is not there, good mother,” he said; and the old rider replied: “Perhaps they are too far off for you to see clearly.” She clapped her hands; and, at once, all the girls came up out of the sea and fell into line, still wet with water diamonds. Then, one by one, swaying and balancing, they walked past the rock, armed only with the buckler of their hair and the bright sword of their nakedness.

Then, O Hassan, what did you not see? Oh, every colour and every form of little rabbit between the thighs of these kings' daughters! O little rabbits, you were fat and plump and round, and white and domed and big, and vaulted and high and close, and jutting, intact, and shut, like thrones, like fishes, and heavy, full-lipped and dumb; you were nests, you had no ears, and you were warm; you were tented and hairless, you were muzzled and deaf; you were little and cuddled, you were split and sensitive, you were dry and delightful; but you were not to be compared with the little rabbit of Splendour.

Hassan let them all pass, and then said to Mother-of-Lances: "Not one of these girls in any way resembles Splendour." "Then, Hassan," answered the astonished old woman, "there only remain the seven daughters of our king. Describe your wife to me, that I may recognise her; for, with a good description, I think I can promise to find her." Then said Hassan: "To attempt to describe her would be to die frustrated; but I can give you a shadow of her. Her face is white as a happy day and her waist so slight that the sun may cast no shadow by it. Her hair is black and lies upon her shoulders like night on day; her breasts pierce through all silk, her tongue is the tongue of bees; the water of her mouth is as the water of the fountain of Salsabil, her eyes shine like the streams of Kauser, she is a branch of jasmin; there is a beauty spot on her right cheek and a mother spot below her navel; her mouth is carnelian needing no cup, and her cheeks are the anemones of Neman; her belly is a marble jar and there is fairer workmanship in her backside than in the temple of Iram; her thighs were melted in the mould of perfection, as sweet as the return of friends; between them is the throne of

the khalifat, the sanctuary of rest and drunkenness, of which the poet wrote this riddle:

*A thing of grace, appealing to the poet,
And four by five, and six by ten will show it.**

O Splendour, Splendour, because of you I am a dervish who has lost his bowl, a pilgrim with a wounded heel, my legs and arms have been cut off!"

While Hassan wept, the old woman reflected for a long time; then she said: "O Hassan, what evil chance! We are both lost beyond recall; for the girl you have described is surely one of the daughters of our king. You are mad, Hassan! Between the two of you there is a gulf fixed as between earth and sky; your search is a search for death. Listen to me, good Hassan, and do not hazard your soul further upon this enterprise."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Six-hundred-and-eighth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

HASSAN FELL DOWN in a swoon because of the old woman's words; and, when he came to himself, wept so bitterly that his garments were wetted as if he had plunged into the sea. "O aunt of help," he cried, "must I then return in despair, having come so far?"

* *The riddle: Kaf, which stands for twenty, and Sin, which stands for sixty, together spell Kus, a low word for the female parts.*

After your promises, how can I doubt my success without doubting your power? You command all the troops of the Seven Isles, and surely nothing is impossible with you." "It is true that I hold supreme power over my amazons," she answered, "for that reason, I give you leave to choose any one of them, instead of your wife, if that will turn you from your purpose. You may take her with you to your native city and live with her beyond the vengeance of our king. If you do not consent to this, we are both most certainly lost." Hassan answered only with fresh tears and sobbing, so that the old woman was discomfited by his grief, and thus continued: "What, in Allah's name, do you wish me to do for you? If it were known that I had let you land here, my head would answer for it. If it were known that I had shown you my virgin band all naked, my life would last no longer than the telling." But Hassan cried: "I swear that I did not look at the girls save in the way of politeness, nor did I pay particular attention to their nakedness." "There you were wrong, Hassan," answered the old woman, "for you will never see such a sight again in your whole life. . . . Now, if I cannot tempt you with one of my followers, I am willing to give you so generously of the treasures of this island that you may return to your own place and live extravagantly for the rest of your days." But Hassan threw himself at the old woman's feet, and cried: "O my helper, O light of my eyes, my queen, how can I return to my land when I have braved such wearying dangers? How can I leave this isle unsatisfied, when only my thirst for love led me to it? Try to be certain, O lady, that Fate wills me to succeed, since it has let me reach so far!" And Hassan's soul welled up within him and he improvised these lines:

*What could my heart against the eyes
Which throw gold cords on kings?
The rose-fed wings of paradise
Stayed at your dark hair's garden spice
To learn new perfumings;
And the white stars came down with sighs
About your slim neck's argencies
And danced into a ring.*

When the old amazon heard this poem, she realised that it would be cruel to take all hope away from Hassan; therefore she said: "My son, put by your sadness, for I have now decided to risk all for you. Love has no understanding; I must be its ears and eyes. This is one of the seven islands which makes up Wak-Wak; each is ruled by one of the king's daughters, and it is the eldest, Nur Al-Huda, who governs here. I will go now and speak to her in your favour; refresh your eyes and calm your dear spirit, for I will soon return."

When the amazon general came into the princess's presence, she kissed the earth between the hands of Nur Al-Huda; and the girl, who loved and respected the old woman, rose in her honour and bade her be seated. "Allah grant that you bring good tidings!" she said, "And, if it is a matter of some request, behold, I am ready and favourable."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Six-hundred-and-ninth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THEN SAID MOTHER-OF-LANCES: "O queen of time, dear daughter, I come to announce a strange happen-

ing which may in the end lead to amusement for you. I have found a most beautiful youth weeping bitterly and cast upon our island by the waves. When I asked him his tale, he answered that Fate had sent him to us, seeking his wife, and went on to describe the woman in terms which I must confess reminded me of yourself and your sisters. Also, I must add, that never have I seen, among men or Jinn, so handsome a young man."

Nur Al-Huda flew into a great rage, and cried: "O curse among old women, daughter of a thousand cuckolds, how dared you introduce a man into our island! Offspring of shame, ah, who will give me your blood to drink, your flesh to mash between my teeth?" The old woman trembled like a reed in a tempest, and fell upon her knees, as the princess continued: "Do you not fear my vengeance and my anger? By my father's head, I do not know why you are not already cut in pieces and made a terrible example for those who will guard our island in the future. . . . Before I do anything, fetch me this rash human who has dared to violate our sacred bounds." Mother-of-Lances rose in a maze of terror and, as she went forth to look for Hassan, murmured to herself: "This youth will be the death of me! Why did I not drive him away?" Then, when she came to where she had left Hassan, she cried aloud: "Rise up, dead youth, for the queen wishes to speak with you!" "Into what gulf have I fallen?" thought Hassan, as he followed the old woman into the royal presence.

Nur Al-Huda sat veiled upon her throne and said no word, while Hassan kissed the earth between her hands and then paid her compliments in verse; but when he had finished, she signed to the old woman to question him. Then said Mother-of-Lances: "Our

mighty queen returns your greeting and asks you: what is your name, your native land, the name of your wife, and the names of your children?" Hassan, following his fate, replied: "Queen of the world, sovereign of time, O peerless of all ages, my poor name is Hassan the Unfortunate, and I come from the city of Bassora in Irak. My wife's name I do not know; my children are called Nasir and Mansur." "And why did your wife leave you?" asked the queen through the old woman. "By Allah, I do not know," answered Hassan, "but it must have been in spite of herself." "How, and from where did she depart?" was the next question. "From Baghdad," Hassan replied, "from the very palace of the khalifat, Haroun Al-Rachid, Commander of the Faithful. As for the means: she dressed herself in a cloak of feathers and flew off into the air. She said to my mother: 'O mother of Hassan, I grieve to go. I mourn for your son. This separation will tear your hearts and blacken your days, but I can do nothing. The drunkenness of the air is upon me and I must go. Yet, if your son would find me again, he has but to search for me in the isles of Wak-Wak. Farewell, O mother of Hassan!' Thus my wife spake before she flew away, and since then the world has been dark before my eyes." Then said Nur Al-Huda with a shake of her head: "As Allah lives, if your wife had not wished to see you again, she would never have told your mother her destination; but, on the other hand, if she had loved you truly, she would not have left you." Hassan swore the solemnest oaths that his wife loved him truly, that she had given him a thousand proofs of her devoted affection, but had been unable to resist the call of the air and the instinct of bird flight. "I have

told you my sad story," said he, "I stand before you as a suppliant, praying you to pardon my audacity and to help me to find my wife and children. In Allah's name, O queen, do not repulse me!"

Nur Al-Huda reflected for an hour and then raised her head, saying: "I have tried to find a sufficient punishment for you; but, so far, have not succeeded."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Six-hundred-and-tenth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THEN THE OLD woman overcame her fright and cast herself at her mistress's feet, covering her head with the hem of the royal robe, and saying: "O great queen, for the sake of the days when I nursed you, do not punish this poor man now that you have heard the trials and perils which he has undergone. Only through the will of Destiny that he should live to old age, was he able to come out of those dangers alive. It would be worthy of your sweet nobility to pardon him and not offend the laws of hospitality. Remember that love alone thrust him into his rash enterprise and that much must be pardoned to lovers. Also, O crown of our heads, be sure that I would never have dared to speak to you of this most handsome youth had he not been chief of all men in the invention of verses and the construction of odes. If you do not believe what I say, unveil your face for him and he will celebrate it fittingly." "This is in truth the last straw!"

answered the queen with a smile; for in spite of the severity of her attitude, her entrails had been moved within her by the beauty of Hassan and she wished nothing better than to try his skill, in verse and that which so usually follows it. She feigned to be convinced by her old nurse, and showed all her face, lifting her veil.

Hassan gave a great cry which shook the palace, and fell into a swoon; when Mother-of-Lances solicitously brought him to himself and asked the reason of his indisposition, he said: "O Allah, what have I seen! The queen is either my wife or else is as like her as one half of a bean is like the other." The queen laughed so heartily that she fell over on her side; when she could speak, she said: "This young man is mad! He says that I am his wife! Since when have virgins brought forth without man or had children by the empty air? . . . Tell me, my dear, in what I resemble your wife; for I can see that you are in some doubt about me." Then said Hassan: "O queen of kings, O shade for great and small, your beauty has made me mad. Your star-defying eyes are those of my wife; the flowers of your cheeks and your breasts' loveliness are hers; you have her lightness; doubtless those things which I may not see are hers also; but between you there is a difference which only my lover's eyes may see and even my lover's tongue cannot express."

The princess understood that Hassan's heart would never belong to her and, conceiving a violent hatred for him, determined to find out which of her sisters had married against their father's will. "I will be revenged upon the two of them!" she said to herself: but aloud and to the old woman she said: "O nurse, go and find my six sisters in their islands and tell them

that, since they have not visited me for two years, their absence weighs heavily upon my heart. Invite them to come to me and bring them here yourself; but be very careful not to say a word to any of them of what has happened."

Ignorant of her mistress's intent, Mother-of-Lances hastened to the islands of the six princesses and easily persuaded the first five to accompany her. But when she came to the seventh island, where the youngest princess lived with her father, the king of kings of the Jinn, she found it difficult to make her accept. The reason for this reluctance shall now be told. When the youngest princess went to ask her father's leave to visit her eldest sister, the king was perturbed, and answered: "Dear daughter, favourite of my heart, there is something in my soul which tells me that I will never see you again if you leave the palace. Last night I had a terrifying dream. . . ."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Six-hundred-and-eleventh Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

"LIGHT OF MY EYES, a dream weighed heavy on my sleep last night. I walked among a hidden treasure and, admiring all, yet fixed my chief delight upon seven shining and precious jewels. The smallest was the most beautiful, the most desirable; therefore I took it in my hand, pressed it against my heart, and carried it out from the place of treasure. As I held it before my eyes in the sunlight, a strange bird, such

as I have never seen upon these islands, attacked me, snatched the stone away, and flew into the air with it. This cast me into a stupor of grief and, when I woke, I sent for the interpreters of dreams, telling them what I had seen in my sleep. 'O king,' they said to me, 'the seven jewels were your seven daughters and the smallest is she who shall be ravished away from you by force.' I am afraid to let you go with your sisters to visit Nur Al-Huda, for something terrible may happen on the journey." Then Splendour (for the youngest princess was Splendour, wife of Hassan) answered her father: "We must remember, O great king, that Nur Al-Huda has prepared a festival for me and greatly desires me to go. For two years I have meant to visit her and she would have every reason to resent it if I were to refuse her invitation now. There is no need for you to be afraid, dear father. Do you not recall how, some time ago, I went far off with my companions and you thought me lost; yet I came back in health and safety? This time, I will return at the end of a month. When I left the islands you were perhaps right to be anxious; but what enemy could reach me here? Who could pass over Cloud Mountain, Blue Mountain, Black Mountain, the Seven Valleys, the Seven Seas, and Camphor Land, without finding death a thousand times by the way? Refresh your eyes, lift up your heart, dear father, you need have no fear for me."

Partly reassured by these arguments, the king gave unwilling consent, on condition that Splendour only stayed for a few days with her sister. After he had given her an escort of a thousand amazons and embraced her tenderly, Splendour first went to kiss her two children in the unsuspected retreat which she had found for them with two faithful slaves, and then fol-

lowed the old woman and her sisters into Nur Al-Huda's island.

In order fittingly to receive her sisters, the eldest princess had put on a fair robe of red silk, on which were gold birds with emerald beak and claws; she sat, heavy with jewels, on her audience throne with Hassan standing before her guarded by girls holding naked swords and pointed lances.

When the old nurse asked for an audience, she was bidden to introduce the eldest of the six visiting princesses. This girl, whose name was King's-Pride, entered the presence clad in a robe of blue silk, and kissed her sister's hand. Nur Al-Huda rose in her honour and made her sit by her side; then she turned to Hassan, saying: "Tell me, human, is this your wife?" and Hassan answered: "By Allah, she is the rising of the moon, her hair is blacker than charcoal, she smiles and her breasts are proud, she is the work of a cunning silversmith, I would say of her:

*Her veil is torn from the bright blue
Which all the stars are hasting to,
Her lips control a hive of bees,
And roses are about her knees,
The white flakes of the jasmin twine
Round her twin sweetness carnaline,
Her waist is a slight reed which stands
Swayed on a hill of moving sands.*

Thus I see her; but between her and my wife there is a difference which my tongue cannot compass."

Nur Al-Huda signed to the old woman to introduce the second sister. Talisman, for such was her name, entered, clad in a robe of apricot silk and lo! she was

more beautiful than the one who had gone before. Her sister made her sit beside King's-Pride and then asked Hassan if he recognised his wife.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Six-hundred-and-twelfth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THEN SAID HASSAN: "O queen, she ravishes the reason and enchains the heart; she inspires me to this:

*You are more fair than a winter moon,
And fairer yet is your coming soon;
I said when I saw your falling hair:
'Night's black fain wing is hiding day.'
'A cloud, but lo! the moon is there.'
You, rose child, found to say.*

Thus I see her; but between her and my wife there is a difference beyond the compass of my tongue." The third sister, Evening-Light, was more beautiful than the two who had gone before; she wore a robe of grenade silk. When Hassan was asked of her, he said: "Queen and crown of my head, this one would rob the sages of their wisdom; my marvel at her has produced these lines:

*You are as slight as a running deer,
As small as a child with his father's bow,
Yet you so shine that when you go
The sun will fly and night appear.*

It is so I see her; but between her and my wife, though she seems and walks like her, there is a difference which my tongue cannot tell." Then the fourth sister, who was named Clear-Sky, entered in a robe of yellow silk covered with pleasant designs. Of her Hassan improvised this song:

*You are the fortunate moon which shone
On the road I used to take
Many a glad night for the sake
Of a once desirous one;
Yet if now a lover nears,
Unrecking silver fire,
Your breasts' two crimson granite spears
Are proof against desire.*

"This does not paint her fully," said he, "it would take a long-breathed ode to do that. Yet I must tell you that she is not my wife." The fifth sister, the fair White-Dawn, came in with a movement of her hips; she was as supple as a branch, as light as a fawn. When she had sat down and arranged the folds of her gold-worked green silk robe, Hassan made these lines about her:

*Green leaves as fairly shade the red pomegranate
flowers
As you, your light chemise.
I ask its name which suits your golden cheek,
You ponder and then speak:
'It has no name, for it is my chemise.'
Yet I will call it murderer of ours,
A murderous chemise. . . .
Sure, you are fairer far than these
Poor compliments and light chemise,*

*Your slim legs whisper: "Stay!"
When I pass by that way,
But if I further go
A sweeter thing does: "Do!"
While you say: "Nay!"*

All who were in the presence marvelled at his talent and the queen herself showed approval, in spite of her resentment. The old amazon took advantage of this lucky turn to say: "O queen, did I mislead you when I spoke of this young man's admirable art in constructing verses? Are not his improvisations delicate and discreet? I pray you to forget his boldness and attach him to your person, to be your poet on festivals and occasions of solemnity."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Six-hundred-and-thirteenth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

BUT THE QUEEN answered: "First I will finish this testing. Bring in my youngest sister!" The old woman went out and returned immediately with the princess named World's-Fairing, who was none other than Splendour.

O Splendour, you wore your beauty only, disdain-
ing ornament and lying veils, yet Destiny stalked with
you into the hall!

When Hassan saw Splendour he gave a great cry
and fell unconscious to the ground and, when Splendour
heard that cry and recognised her husband,

she screamed and swooned all along before the throne.

Nur Al-Huda no longer concealed her jealousy and anger. "Seize that human and cast him outside the city!" she cried to her guards; and the guards carried Hassan away and threw him down upon the sea shore. As soon as Splendour came to herself, the queen called out on her: "What have you to do with this human, O wanton, O doubly-base? For you married without your father's leave and then you left your husband. Thus you have stained the nobility of your race and the fault must be washed in blood!" Then to her women she cried: "Bring a ladder and fasten this dead woman to it by the hair; beat her until the blood runs." After that, she wrote a letter to her father telling him the whole tale of Hassan and Splendour, and describing the punishment which she was about to inflict. She begged the king to answer at once with definite instructions for his daughter's final punishment, and intrusted her letter to a swift messenger.

When the king read Nur Al-Huda's letter, the world darkened before his eyes, and he sent answer to her that all punishment would be as a feather against that fault and that he left it to her wisdom and justice to find the form of death and see it carried out.

While Splendour groaned on the ladder, waiting for her punishment, Hassan came to himself on the sea shore and began to lament his evil fortune. What might he hope? How might he find help to flee from that disastrous island? He rose and began to wander hopelessly about the beach, until these words of the poet came into his mind:

*When you were a thought in the breast of your mother
My Vision beheld you, My Justice designed;*

Therefore, dream of My Dream, do not seek for another

While the Thinker remembers the thought of His Mind.

This precept renewed his courage and he walked with better hope upon the beach, trying to imagine what had happened during his swoon and why he had been thus cast away. As he pondered, he came upon two little amazons, twelve years old, violently fighting each other on the sands, and near the place of their struggle lay a leather cap with writing and design upon it. He went up to the children and, while trying to separate them, asked the cause of their quarrel. When they answered that they were disputing for the cap, Hassan suggested that he should be their arbiter. They consented and he at once picked up the cap, saying: "I will throw a stone in the air and the one who brings it to me shall have the cap." "That is an excellent plan," said the little amazons.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Six-hundred-and-fourteenth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

HASSAN PICKED UP a stone and threw it as far as he could; then, while the little girls were racing for it, he put the cap upon his head and left it there. Soon the children came back and the one who had got the stone cried: "I have won! Where are you, O man?" She came up to the place where he stood and looked all

about without seeing him; her sister joined her and searched also. "They are not blind; how is it that they do not see me?" said Hassan to himself; then aloud he cried: "Here I am!" The little girls looked in the direction of the voice and, seeing no one, began to whimper with fear. Hassan touched them on the shoulder, saying: "Here I am. Why are you crying, little ones?" At this the girls were terrified and ran away with all their might, screaming as if some evil Ifrit were after them. "There can be no further doubt," said Hassan to himself, "This is a magic cap; a cap of invisibility. Allah has sent it to me! Now I can steal back and see my wife." Dancing for joy, he returned towards the city and, wishing to try the power of the cap on the old amazon, searched through the palace until he found her, chained by a ring to the wall in one of the chambers. To be quite certain that he was really invisible, he went to a shelf on which were ranged a number of porcelain jars and brought the largest of them crashing to the ground. The old woman uttered a cry of terror, thinking she had to do with some malevolent Jinni sent by Nur Al-Huda. She began to utter a conjuration, saying: "O Ifrit, I order you, by the name graven upon the Seal of Sulayman, to tell me who you are." "I am no Ifrit, but Hassan of Bassora, whom you protected," answered Hassan, "I have come to free you." So saying, he took off the magic cap and stood before her. "Woe, woe, for poor Hassan!" cried the old woman, "The queen is already sorry that she did not put you to death and has sent slaves in search of you, promising a quintal of gold for you, dead or alive! Do not lose a moment, but flee from this place!" She told Hassan of the punishments which the queen had in store for Splendour; but Hassan answered: "Allah

will save her, just as he will save us, from the hands of that cruel princess. This cap is enchanted and, by its help, I can walk where I wish without being seen." Then cried the old woman: "Praise be to Allah, who makes dead bones alive and has sent you this cap for our salvation! Free me quickly and I will show you where your wife is imprisoned." Hassan cut her bonds and took her by the hand, putting on the cap at the same time. Immediately they both became invisible, and the old woman was able to lead him to a dungeon where Splendour languished, still fastened to the ladder by her hair, and waiting, with what fortitude she might, for death and torture. Hassan heard her murmuring these lines:

*O night of my soul be dark,
Eyes be rivers, hope be stark;
And hope stir not in your death,
For my eyes that fiery breath
Surely quenched with all their wetting
Falling down apart . . .
Years on years into my heart
Let eternal worms go fretting,
Yet they will not reach the trace
Of his lost and lovely face.*

Although Hassan did not wish to appear too suddenly before his wife, lest the emotion should be too much for her, her deep grief caused him to throw his cap aside and take her in his arms. When she realised that it was he, she swooned against his breast; but Hassan cut her bonds and, with the old woman's help, tenderly brought her to herself. He took her head upon his knees and fanned her with his hand until she opened her eyes, and asked: "Did you come down

from the sky or up through the bosom of the earth? Dear husband, what can we do against Destiny? I beg you to leave my fate to run its course and return instantly by the way you came, for I do not wish to see you a prey to my sister's savagery." "Dearly beloved one, light of my eyes," said Hassan, "I have come to take you back to Baghdad." "You are rash even to madness!" said she, "Begone, I pray, and do not add to my suffering." But Hassan reassured her, saying: "Splendour of my soul, I shall leave the palace only with you and this good old woman. If you would know how, behold this magic cap!"

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Six-hundred-and-fifteenth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

HASSAN SHOWED HER the working of the cap and told her how Allah had placed it in his way. Then Splendour wept for both joy and contrition, and said to him: "All these evils are my fault, since I left our home in Baghdad without your leave. Master and love, spare me your reproaches, for I now know that a wife should put a proper value on her husband. I ask pardon before Allah and before you. My only excuse is that my soul was filled with a strange longing when I saw my feathers." "As Allah lives, I only am to blame. I left you alone in Baghdad; I ought to have taken you with me," answered Hassan, "In future we will depart and return together." So saying he put Splendour on his back and took the old woman's hand, so that all three of them became invisible. They left the palace and made haste to the seventh

island, where little Nasir and Mansur were concealed.

Though Hassan was moved in all his being to see his children safe and sound, he lost no time in an outburst of tenderness. The old woman took the babies astride on her shoulders, while Splendour, thanks to the invisibility of the cap, succeeded in taking three new garments of feathers from the wardrobe of the Jinn. Then all three put on these cloaks of enchanted flight, and left the fatal islands of Wak-Wak for ever.

They flew by short stages and, coming one morning to the City of Peace, alighted on the terrace of Hassan's palace. Descending the stairs, they arrived at the door of the room where Hassan's mother stayed eternally with her grief. The old woman was now very feeble and nearly blind because of her sorrow; yet, when Hassan knocked at the door, she asked courageously: "Who is there?" "Dear mother," answered Hassan, "Destiny is at the door with joyful news!"

Not knowing whether this was illusion or reality, the old woman ran, as fast as her weakened legs could carry her, and opened the door. She saw Hassan before her with his wife and children and the old amazon standing discreetly behind them. The emotion was too great for her and she fell fainting in their arms. Hassan brought her to herself with the tears which fell from his eyes upon her face, and then pressed her gently to his breast. Splendour showered a thousand kisses upon her, most humbly asking pardon for her fault. Then they presented Mother-of-Lances as their saviour, and Hassan told their marvellous adventures. But it is needless to repeat the story in this place. They glorified Allah together that He had at last brought them safely into one place.

From that time on they lived delightfully, nor did they miss to go each year, by caravan, thanks to the

magic drum, to visit the seven princesses in the green-domed palace upon Cloud Mountain.

It was many long years before the inexorable Destroyer of happiness came in his turn to visit them. Glory and praise be to Him who reigns over the visible and invisible, the Sole Living, the Eternal, who knows not death!

When Shahrazade had told this extraordinary tale, little Doniazade fell upon her neck and kissed her upon the mouth, saying: "Dear sister, that tale is both miraculous and tasteful. I so loved Roseleaf; I am very sorry that Hassan did not marry her also!" Then said King Shahryar: "That tale is indeed astonishing, Shahrazade. It almost made me forget certain unpleasant duties which I have to undertake tomorrow." But Shahrazade answered: "O king, that tale is not to be compared with one which I know concerning the Historic Fart." "What do you say, Shahrazade?" cried the king, "What is this historic fart? I have never heard of it." "It is a tale which I had intended to tell you tomorrow night, if I were still alive," answered Shahrazade; so Shahryar said within himself: "I will not kill her until I have learnt more about this strange matter."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Six-hundred-and-sixteenth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THIS ANECDOTE COMES from The Diwan of Jovial and Indecent Folk. I will tell it at once.

And Shahrazade said:

THE DIWAN OF JOVIAL
AND INDECENT FOLK

THE HISTORIC FART

IT IS RELATED—but Allah is all-knowing—that there was once in the city of Kaukaban in Yaman, a Bedouin of the tribe of the Fazli, whose name was Abu Al-Hassan. At an early age he left nomadic life and had become a polished citizen and rich merchant. He had married in his youth, but Allah had called his wife into His mercy after a year of marriage; thus it was that Abu's friends were always pressing him to marry again and quoting these words of the poet:

*Rise up and hear the season sing,
The girls are here for marrying,
And a glad wife's an almanac
Whose scented leaves point ever back
And tell about the Spring.*

At length Abu Al-Hassan could hold out against these persuasions no longer; so he entered into communication with the old women who negotiate marriages, and became betrothed to a damsel as beautiful as the moon shining on the sea. He gave great feasts to celebrate the wedding and asked not only his friends, but also the ulema, fakirs, dervishes, and santons of the city. He opened wide the doors of his house and provided for his guests rice of seven different colours, sherberts, lamb stuffed with nuts, almonds, pistachios, and raisins, and a young camel roasted and presented whole. All the guests ate and drank joyfully, and when the bride had been shown seven times, dressed in different and costly robes, she

was led round for an eighth circle, so that those eyes might gaze their fill which were not yet satisfied. After that the old women led her into the bridal chamber and, upon a bed as high as a throne, prepared her in every way for the entrance of her lord.

Abu Al-Hassan came slowly and with dignified steps into the chamber, and sat for a moment on the diwan to prove, both to himself and to his wife and the women, that he was a man of gravity and good manners. He rose weightily to receive the wishes of the old women and to dismiss them, before going up to the bed where the girl so modestly awaited him; but, ah, horror, his belly was full of heavy meat and drink! He let a fine, terrible, resounding fart! May the Devil be far from us!

Each old woman turned to her neighbour and began speaking in a loud voice, pretending that she had heard nothing; the bride, instead of laughing or mocking, chinked and rattled her bracelets to add to the covering noise. But Abu Al-Hassan, more than half-dead with mortification, pleaded a pressing need and ran down into the court. He saddled his mare and, leaping upon her back, fled through the shadows of the night away from his house, his marriage, and his bride. He left the city, he crossed the desert, he came to the sea side and went aboard a boat bound for India. In time he came to the Malabar coast.

There he became acquainted with many men from Yaman, who spoke so well of him to the king of that land that he was appointed captain of the royal guard. He lived in enjoyment of that post for ten years, honoured and respected in the midst of luxury; and whenever the memory of his fart came to him, he banished it from his mind as an unclean thing.

But at the end of those ten years he was seized with

a great longing for his native land and pined for his city and his house, and well-nigh died of his exile. One day he could resist the solicitations of his soul no longer; therefore, without even asking leave of the king, he absconded and returned to the land of Hadramaut, and Yaman. He disguised himself as a dervish and, journeying on foot towards Kaukaban, came to a hill which overlooked that city. He gazed down upon the terrace of his old house and, with tears in his eyes, exclaimed: "Pray God that no one recognises me! May He have made them forget!" He came down from the hill and took side streets that would lead him to his house. As he went he saw an old woman sitting at her door, taking the lice from the head of a little ten year old girl. He heard the child saying: "Mother, I wish to know my age; one of my friends is going to cast my horoscope. Tell me when I was born." The old woman reflected for a moment, and then said: "You were born on the night and in the year when Abu Al-Hassan let his fart."

The unhappy Abu turned and fled, giving his legs to the wind. "Your fart has become a date!" he lamented, "It will go down the years, as long as there are palm trees." And he did not cease his flight till he was back in India, where he lived in the bitterness of exile until his death. Allah pity him!

Then Shahrazade said again:

THE TWO JESTERS

IT IS ALSO related, O auspicious King, that there was once in the city of Damascus in Syria, a man noted for his droll and indelicate tricks; also there was another in Cairo, not less famous for the same quality. The

Damascene jester had often heard tell of his Cairene rival and was the more anxious to meet him since his usual admirers were always saying: "There can be no doubt that the Egyptian is more spiteful and intelligent, cleverer and more amusing than you. To be with him is much more droll. If you do not believe us, go and see his work in Cairo and you will be forced to acknowledge his superiority." At last the man said to himself: "There is nothing for it, I must go to Cairo and see for myself." He made his luggage and left Damascus for Cairo; and Allah brought him safe and sound to that city. Immediately he enquired for the dwelling of his rival and paid him a visit; the jester of Cairo received him with a large hospitality and most cordial welcome. The two passed the night in agreeable conversation concerning the affairs of the great world.

Next morning the guest said to his host: "Dear companion, my sole reason for coming to Cairo was to judge for myself those excellent tricks and passes which I have heard that you play unceasingly upon your city. I would not like to return without instruction. Will you let me have a taste of your quality?" "Dear friend," answered the other, "they have been deceiving you. I am one of those slow fellows who can hardly distinguish his left hand from his right. How could I hope to teach a delicate Damascus spark like you? Still, since my duty as a host requires that I show you the fair things of our city, let us go out for a walk."

The Cairene led his guest to the mosque of Al-Ashar, so that he might tell the people of Damascus of the religious and scientific marvel which he had seen; but on the way he paused at a flower stall and bought a large bunch of aromatic herbs, carnations,

roses, sweet basil, jasmin, mint, and marjoram. When they entered the court of the mosque they saw many persons satisfying their needs in the line of privies which faced the fountain of ablution; so the Cairo man said to his guest: "Now tell me, if you wanted to play a trick on this line of squatting persons, how would you set about it?"

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Six-hundred-and-eighteenth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

"THE METHOD IS OBVIOUS," answered the man from Damascus. "I would go behind them with a thorny broom and, while I swept, prick all their bums as if by accident." "There is something a trifle heavy and gross to my mind about that pleasantry," said the Cairene, "Such jokes verge a little towards the indelicate. Now watch me!" He went up to the line of defecators with a friendly smile and offered a spray of flowers to each in turn, saying: "Allow me, good master." In confusion and fury, each replied: "Allah curse you, you son of a pimp! Where do you think we are, in the dining room?" All the people of the court laughed most heartily at the expressions of these people.

Then the man from Damascus turned to his host, and said: "You have beaten me, O prince of jesters. It is a true proverb which says: *As fine as an Egyptian; for he can pass through the eye of a needle!*"

Then Shahrazade said again:

A WOMAN'S TRICK

IT IS RELATED, O auspicious King, that there was a well-born young woman in a certain city whose husband was often absent upon journeys near and far. At length the temptation of the flesh was too strong for her and, as a balm for her torment, she chose the most handsome youth of his time. They loved each other with extraordinary devotion and satisfied each other at ease and joyfully, rising to eat, eating to lie down, and lying down to couple.

One day the youth was solicited by an old white-bearded man, a double-dealing pervert, a knife for colocasia; but, instead of submitting, he quarrelled with the sheikh, beat him about the face, and tore away his evil beard. Therefore the old man complained to the wali of that city and the wali had the youth seized and thrown into prison.

When the young woman learnt that her lover was in gaol she was both grieved and angry; delaying only long enough to form a plan, she put on her most seductive ornaments and, after soliciting an audience with the wali, entered the hall of requests. As Allah lives, she could have obtained all the requests of all the world, showing herself so supple and so fair. After greeting, she said: "O our lord the wali, the youth so-and-so, whom you have put in prison, is my brother and the sole support of our house. His accuser is a rascally pervert and the witnesses were false. I come to beg that you will, of your justice, deliver my brother; if you refuse, our house will fall in ruins and I shall die of hunger." At first sight the wali had felt his heart work powerfully towards the girl; therefore

he answered: "I am disposed to free your brother. Go now into the harem of my house and, when the audiences are over, I will come and talk to you about the matter." Understanding what he meant, she said to herself: "I swear by Allah, old dirty beard, that you will not touch me save in apricot time." But aloud she answered: "O our lord the wali, it would be better if you came to my house where we might talk at greater ease than in this place; for in a harem I should be a stranger." "And where is your house?" asked the delighted wali. "In such and such a place. I will expect you this evening at sundown," she answered; and went out from the presence, leaving the wali floundering in a stormy sea.

She went next to the kadi, who was an old man, and said, bowing before him: "O our master the kadi, I pray you cast the eyes of justice upon my cause; for Allah will do so to you and more also." "Who has oppressed you?" asked the kadi, and she answered: "A wicked sheikh who has had my brother, the sole prop of my house, imprisoned on false witness. I beg you to intercede for me with the wali that my brother may be released." When the kadi saw and heard the girl, he fell violently in love with her, and therefore answered: "I will take up your brother's cause. Go now into the harem of my house; I will join you when I am at liberty and we can talk together. All will be as you desire." Low to herself, the girl said: "Son of a pimp, you shall have me in the time of apricots!" But aloud she said: "O master, it will be better if I wait for you in my house, where none can disturb us." "And where is your house?" he asked. "In such and such a place," she answered, "I will wait for you tonight a little after sunset." Then she went

forth from the kadi and sought the wazir of the king.

She told the wazir of the youth's imprisonment and begged him to give an order of release. Then said the wazir: "That should not be difficult. In the meanwhile, go into the harem; I will join you there and we can talk about the matter." "By the life of your head, O master," she answered, "I am very shy and would not dare go into your harem. My own house is better fitted for such a conversation: I will await you there an hour after sunset this evening." She told him the place of her house and departed for the king's palace.

As soon as she entered the presence, the king marvelled at her beauty, and said to himself: "By Allah, here is something to be taken hot and hungry!" Then, aloud and kindly, he asked: "Who has oppressed you?" "There can be no oppression," she answered, "for our king is just." Then said the king: "Allah alone is just! What can I do for you?" "Give me an order of release for my brother," she answered, "He has been unjustly imprisoned." "That is easy," said the king, "Go and wait in my harem, child. Justice shall have its course." "In that case, O king," she ventured, "I would rather wait in my own house. For such a conversation as ours, the king must know that there are many preparations necessary, baths and the like; those preparations I cannot perfectly make except in my own poor house, which, after tonight, will be a palace." "Be it so," answered the king. When they had agreed about the time of the meeting, the girl left the royal presence and went to find a carpenter.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Six-hundred-and-twentieth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

TO THE CARPENTER, she said: "I wish you to deliver at my house, early this evening, a large cupboard with four shelves, one above the other; each of the shelves must have a separate door with strong locks." "By Allah, good mistress," answered the carpenter, "it cannot be done by this evening." "But I will pay you anything you like to ask," she said; and he answered: "In that case it shall be ready, dear mistress. I ask neither silver nor gold, but only a certain favour which you can well imagine. Come into the back of the shop, where we can talk at ease about the measurements of the cupboard." But the girl laughed and said: "My dear carpenter, you have no tact! Do you think that that dirty little place at the back of your shop is suitable for a conversation such as ours? Come round to my house this evening, after you have sent the cupboard, and we will talk about measurements until the morning. . . . Only, I have just remembered that I require five shelves and not four. Yes, I need five shelves for all the remarkable merchandise which I wish to lock away." Then she gave the carpenter her address and returned home.

She took five robes of different colour and shape from a coffer and carefully set them out; she made ready meat and drink, arranged flowers and burnt perfumes. Then she sat down to wait the arrival of her guests.

Towards sunset, the carpenter's porter brought the cupboard and, at the girl's order, placed it in the reception hall. The porter had hardly departed and

the girl had not had time even to try the locks, before there was a knock at the door. The wali entered, and his hostess, rising in his honour and kissing the earth between his hands, made him be seated and plied him with refreshments. Then she cast eyes a foot long in his direction, together with such burning glances that the wali sat up and trembled with a desire to possess her immediately. But the girl extricated herself from his embrace, saying: "Surely you lack refinement, my master. Will you not first undress, so that you may be free in your movements?" "There is no difficulty in that," cried the wali, as he cast aside his garments and put on a strangely cut robe of yellow silk, and bonnet of the same, which the girl handed to him. This, you must know, is the custom at licentious feasts. Just as the wali, all muffled in his yellow robe and bonnet, prepared to amuse himself, there came a violent knocking at the door. "Are you expecting some neighbour?" he asked crossly; but she answered in terror: "By Allah, I had quite forgotten that my husband is coming back this evening! It is he who is knocking at the door!" "What will become of me? What must I do?" cried the wali; and she breathlessly replied: "You must get into this cupboard." She opened the door of the lowest shelf, saying: "Get inside." "But how?" he asked. "Squat down," she said; so the wali got into the cupboard and squatted down, being nearly bent in two. The girl locked the door of the shelf and went to open for her next guest.

This proved to be the kadi. She received him in the same manner; but just as he was preparing to throw himself upon her, strangely dressed in a red robe and bonnet, she said: "You have not yet written the order for my brother's liberation." The kadi wrote an order and was handing it to the girl, when there came a

knocking upon the door. "That is my husband!" cried the girl in terror; and, after making the kadi climb up into the second shelf of the cupboard, she went and opened for her third guest.

This was the wazir. He met the same fate as the others; he was swaddled in a green robe and bonnet, and shut into the third shelf of the cupboard, just as the king arrived. The king, in his turn, was rigged out in a blue robe and a blue bonnet, and bundled into the fourth shelf of the cupboard by a violent knocking at the door, just as he was about to do that for which he had come. He was very fat, and to squat in that confined space irked him considerably.

The carpenter entered with famished eyes and would have thrown himself upon the girl at once, had she not said: "Tell me, carpenter, why you made the fifth shelf so small? I can hardly get anything into it." "That is a thoroughly good shelf," he answered, "It would hold me and four like me." "Try then," she said; and the carpenter, climbing on stools set one upon the other, managed to worm his way on to the fifth shelf. At once he was locked in.

The girl then took the kadi's order to the guardians of the prison, and they released her lover without question. The two hurried back to the house and, to celebrate their coming together again, coupled long and violently, with plenty of panting and noise. The five in the cupboard heard all that was going on, but did not dare to move. They squatted one above the other and waited eagerly until they should be released.

When the boy and girl had finished their diversions, they got together all the precious things in the house and shut them in portable chests; then they quickly sold the rest, and left the city for another kingdom. So much for them.

Two days later the five in the cupboard were all seized with a simultaneous desire to piss. The carpenter was the first to succumb; and his piss fell upon the king's head. A moment afterwards the king pissed on the wazir's head, who in his turn pissed on the wali. All except the king and the carpenter lifted up their voices, and cried: "O filth!" The kadi recognised the wazir's voice and the wazir the voice of the kadi. They called out to each other: "We are in a nice trap! Happily the king has been spared!" "Be quiet, for I am here!" cried the king, "And I have no idea who pissed on my head." Then the carpenter exclaimed: "May Allah in every way exalt the king's majesty! I think I must have done it, for I am on the fifth shelf. Also I made the cupboard!"

At this point the girl's husband returned from his journey; the neighbours, who had not noticed the woman and the youth eloping, watched him as he knocked fruitlessly upon the door. When he asked them why none answered, they could not tell him. With their help he burst in the door and the whole crowd of them entered, only to find the house empty, save for a large cupboard. They heard men's voices proceeding from this cupboard and at once determined that it must be full of the Jinn.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Six-hundred-and-twenty-second Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

SPEAKING IN LOUD voices, they agreed to set fire to the cupboard and destroy it completely with all which

it might contain; but, as they were setting about to do this, the kadi's voice called from inside: "Do nothing rash, good folk! We are neither Jinn nor burglars, but so-and-so and so-and-so." In a few words he told them of the trick which had been played upon them all; so that the neighbours at once broke the locks and delivered, from the five shelves of the cupboard, five men disguised in fancy garments. None of those who beheld the victims come forth could refrain from laughing; but the king, in order to console the bereaved husband, said to him: "I appoint you my second wazir." Such is the story. But Allah is all-knowing!

When she had made an end, Shahrazade said to King Shahryar: "You must not think that this is at all to be compared with *The Tale of the Sleeper Awakened*." Then, as the king raised his eyebrows at this unknown title, Shahrazade began without delay:

THE TALE OF THE SLEEPER WAKENED

IT IS RELATED, O auspicious King, that there was a young bachelor in Baghdad, during the reign of the khalifat Haroun Al-Rachid, who lived a most strange life and whose name was Abu Al-Hassan. His neighbours never saw him invite a man two days running or, by any chance, entertain a citizen of their city. All who came to his house were strangers; and therefore the people of that quarter, who did not understand this peculiarity, called the young man Abu Al-Hassan the Eccentric.

It was his custom to post himself every evening at the further end of the city bridge and, when he saw

a stranger approach, rich or poor, young or old, to accost him with an urbane smile and beg him to accept the hospitality of his house for his first night in Baghdad. He would lead the stranger home and entertain him royally, keeping him company throughout the night in jovial talk. But on the morrow, he would say: "Dear guest, I invited you when Allah was your sole acquaintance in this city; I did so for a reason of my own. But I have sworn never to entertain even a stranger for two days running, though he were the most charming of the sons of men. Thus I am obliged to separate from you and I beg that, if ever you meet me in the streets of Baghdad, you will pretend not to know me; otherwise I shall be obliged to turn from you myself." After such words as these, Abu Al-Hassan would conduct his guest to one of the khans, and, taking leave of him with words of instruction concerning the ways of the city, would never see him again. If, by chance, the two crossed each other's path in the roads or markets, Abu would turn his head, in order that he might not be obliged to salute the other. And for a long time he behaved in this way, entertaining a fresh guest every night.

One evening, at sunset, while Abu waited at the end of the bridge, he saw a man coming towards him dressed like a rich merchant of Mosul and followed by a tall dignified slave. This stranger was the khali-fat Haroun Al-Rachid in disguise, who was returning from one of his monthly tours of secret examination in and about the city. Abu Al-Hassan, who had no suspicion of the stranger's identity, gave him welcome with a gracious bow, and said: "Blessed be your arrival among us, my master! Do me pleasure by accepting my hospitality for tonight, instead of going to a khan. Tomorrow morning you can find a lodging

at your leisure." Then, in order to persuade an acceptance, he told the khalifat of his nightly custom, adding: "Allah is generous, my master; you will find in my house large hospitality, warm bread, and a clear wine." The khalifat found the adventure so strange and Abu so unusual that he made up his mind to know him better; after a half-hearted refusal for good form's sake, he accepted the invitation in these words: "Be it upon my head and before my eye. May Allah increase His benefits about you, good master! I am ready to follow you." So Abu Al-Hassan showed the way and led his new guest to the house, conversing pleasantly the while.

Hassan's mother had made excellent cooking that night; first she served the two with fried cakes stuffed with mince and pine kernels; then with a fat capon islanded among four plump chickens; then with a goose having raisin and nut stuffing; and finally with a pigeon stew. These things looked almost too good to eat until they were tasted.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Six-hundred-and-twenty-fourth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THE TWO ATE greatly of these things and, all the time, Abu Al-Hassan chose the most delicate portions for his guest. After they had washed their hands with basin and ewer, Hassan's mother served dishes with grapes, dates, and pears, and almond paste, and pots filled with conserve. The two ate of these and then began to drink.

Abu Al-Hassan filled the feast cup with wine and turned to his guest, saying: "Dear guest, you know that the cock does not drink without calling the hens to drink with him by uttering little cries; and, were I to drink of this cup alone, the wine would stick in my throat and I should die. For this one night, I beg you to leave sobriety to malcontents and hunt with me among the wine for joy. For I am glad tonight, since my house has been honoured by such a stranger." Wishing to make him talk, the khalifat began to drink with him and, when the wine had lightened their souls a little, he said to Abu Al-Hassan: "Now that there is bread and salt between us, will you tell me why you behave thus hospitably to strangers, and relate the story of your life; for it must be astonishing?" "Not astonishing, but certainly instructive, O guest," replied Abu Al-Hassan, "My name is Abu Al-Hassan, and I am the son of a merchant who, on his death, left me a fair inheritance in Baghdad. As I had been brought up very severely during my father's lifetime, I made haste to recapture the lost moments of my youth; but, being a young man of some reflection, I took the precaution of dividing my inheritance into two parts, one of which I realised in gold and the other disposed safely in stocks. I took the cash and spent generously with lads of my own age, whom I entertained as sumptuously as if I had been an emir. I spared no expense to make our lives delightful and thus, at the end of a year, had come down to my last dinar. Then I turned to my friends, but they had disappeared. I sought them out and begged them to help me in my penury; but they all made excuse and not one of them offered sufficient to keep body and soul together for a single day. So I considered within myself how wise my father had been to raise me strictly.

I returned to my own house and there made a resolution which I have kept ever since: I swore, before Allah, never to be seen in company with my fellow citizens and never to entertain any but strangers. Further, since experience had taught me that a short warm friendship is better than a long one which ends disastrously, I swore never to keep company, even with a stranger, for two days running. Even though he were the most charming of the sons of men! Well I know that the bonds of friendship are cruel bonds, destroying the joys of friendship, so I beg you not to be astonished if I say farewell to you tomorrow morning, after our one night of perfect amity. Also, do not take it ill if I refuse to see you should we ever happen to meet in the streets."

"There is something marvellous to me about such conduct," said the khalifat, "I have never known an eccentric who could act so wisely. I admire you very much: it was shrewd of you to keep the second part of your inheritance. Now you are able to enjoy the conversation of a fresh man every day, avoiding all chance of boredom and disagreement. . . . But what you have said concerning our separation on the morrow is very painful to me, as I should have liked to return your hospitality in some way. I beg you to express some wish to me; for I swear, by the sacred Kaaba, that I will satisfy it. Speak freely and do not pitch your demand too low; for Allah has been good to me in my trade and there is very little which I cannot compass with His help."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Six-hundred-and-twenty-fifth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

ABU AL-HASSAN ANSWERED, without any signs of surprise: "My eye has already been rejoiced with your presence; anything further would be a superfluity. I thank you for your intention; but, since I have neither desire nor ambition, I find it difficult to prefer any request. My state in life suffices me, I do not need to ask help from any." Then said the khalifat: "In Allah's name, my master, do not refuse my request; let your heart prompt you to some desire, that I may satisfy it. Otherwise I shall feel humiliated when I say farewell; for a benefit is harder to sustain than an injury, and a man of breeding must return in double measure. Speak, I pray you!"

Seeing that the khalifat would not be put off, Abu Al-Hassan lowered his head and reflected deeply for a long time; then he raised his eyes, and cried: "I have found something. But it is the request of a madman; I will not tell it to you lest you should have a wrong idea of me." "By the life of my head," returned the khalifat, "no one can say in advance whether an idea is mad or sane. I am only a merchant, but I have more power than you would think to look at me. Speak, I beg you!" Then said Abu Al-Hassan: "I will speak since you insist; but I swear, by virtue of the Prophet (upon whom be prayer and peace!) that none but the khalifat could realise my wish; for I ardently desire to change places with our master, Haroun Al-Rachid, Commander of the Faithful, if only for one day." "What would you do if you were khalifat for one day?" asked Haroun Al-

Rachid; and Abu Al-Hassan, after a momentary pause, replied:

“You must know, O stranger, that the city of Baghdad is divided into quarters and that each quarter has a sheikh at its head; unfortunately the sheikh of my quarter is a creature of such horrible ugliness that I doubt not he was born from the coupling of a hyena and a pig. His approach is pestilential; for his mouth is no ordinary mouth, but rather a dirty anus like the hole of a privy; his fish-coloured eyes pop sideways; his scabby lips are like a venereal sore and jet out spittle when he speaks; his ears are sow’s ears; his flabby painted cheeks are like an old ape’s bottom; the teeth have fallen from his jaws through eating filth; his body is fretted with every foul disease of the earth; as for his anus—well, he has not got one: for he has so long given himself to be a ditch for the tools of donkey-boys, nightmen, and sweepers, that his arsegut has rotted away and is now a cave stuffed with cotton swabs to prevent his tripes from falling out.

“This crapulous creature, with two other foul fellows, sows all the trouble in our quarter; there is no sin that he will not commit, no falsehood that he will not circulate and, because he has a shitty soul, he always exercises his old womanish spite on clean and honest men. He could not do sufficient harm by the pestilence of his presence if he had not two helpers as gross as he.

“The first is a slave, smooth-faced as a eunuch, with yellow eyes and a voice like the farting of donkeys. This offspring of a dog and a whore pretends to be of noble Arab birth, though he comes, in truth, from the lowest Christian stock. His trade is hanging about among the cooks and eunuchs of the great to filch the secrets of their masters and peddle them

through taverns and knocking houses. Nothing comes amiss to him, and if there were a dinar in a dirty arse, he would lick it gladly.

“The second is a fat jester with fat eyes whose business is to make puns among the markets, where he is well-known for a head as bald as an onion and for so terrible a stammer that you would think he was going to vomit his guts with every word. The merchants do not ask him into their shops because he is so fat that, if he sits on a chair, it flies to matchwood beneath him. This one is more foolish but less disgusting than the other two.

“If I were the Prince of Believers for one day, I would not make myself rich, or my folk rich, but I would free our quarter from these dogs and, after suitable punishment, sweep their bodies into the town ditch. Thus would our quarter know tranquillity and my desire be satisfied.”

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Six-hundred-and-twenty-seventh Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

“IN TRUTH, O Abu Al-Hassan,” said the khalifat, “your wish is that of an upright and good-hearted man, for only one with these qualities would so rail because the evil may flourish with impunity. But I do not imagine that your wish would be so difficult to realise as you think; for the khalifat loves a strange adventure as well as any man, and, if he were told, I am sure he would change powers with you for a day

and a night." At this Abu Al-Hassan laughed, and answered: "By Allah, we have not been talking very seriously! If the khalifat were informed, I expect he would shut me up in a madhouse. If your trade should make you known to anyone in the palace, I beg you not to report my vapourings under wine." "I take oath not to speak of the matter to a soul," answered the khalifat; but to himself he swore not to let slip this opportunity, which seemed to promise a better jest than any which he had before compassed in any of his disguises. "It is now my turn to pour the wine, dear host," he said, "So far, you have done all the pouring." He took the bottle and, while filling the cup, cleverly slipped into it a morsel of pure Cretan banj. Then he handed the vessel to Abu Al-Hassan, saying: "May it be wholesome and delicious!" "Who could refuse the pouring of a guest?" replied Abu, "But I must warn you that I may not be able to rise in the morning to see you off; therefore I beg you not to forget to shut the door after you." The khalifat promised and Abu Al-Hassan drained the cup with a quiet mind. Immediately he fell head over heels so rapidly that the khalifat burst out laughing. When he had recovered from his amusement, he called to his slave, saying: "Take this man upon your back and follow me." The slave obeyed and, as they were leaving, the khalifat added: "Mark the place of this house so that you can return to it when I bid you." They went out into the street, but forgot to shut the door.

They entered the palace by the secret wicket and made their way into the khalifat's own bedchamber. "Take off this man's clothes!" said Haroun, "Dress him in my night garments and put him into my bed." As soon as this was done, the khalifat sent for all the

dignitaries of his palace: his wazirs, chamberlains, and his eunuchs, together with the women of his harem; when they had collected, he said to them: "Tomorrow you must all come to this room and particularly obey the orders of this man who lies in my garments upon the bed. Pay him exactly the same respect as you would accord to me and treat him in every way as if he were myself. Give him the title of Prince of Believers and do not refuse the least of his desires. If one of you, even were it my own son, should go against my inclinations in this matter, he would be hanged at the palace gate."

"To hear is to obey!" they answered; and retired in silence, realising that the khalifat meant to beguile his weariness in some extraordinary fashion.

Only Giafar and Masrur remained; to these Al-Rachid said: "Tomorrow you must be the first awake, and come here to take the orders of my substitute. You must not be astonished at anything he may say; and you must pretend to take him for the khalifat, whatever he may tell you to the contrary. Give alms to all whom he points out, even if you have to spend all the treasures of my kingdom. Punish, reward, hang, kill, nominate, and deprive, exactly as he commands. Nor need you come to consult me first; for I shall be hidden near by to hear and see what passes. Above all, you must be very careful not to let him suspect for a moment that he is a victim of one of my jokes. . . . Let it be as I say. . . . When you wake come and wake me also."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Six-hundred-and-twenty-eighth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

NEXT MORNING GIAFAR and Masrur woke the khali-fat who hastened to place himself behind a curtain in the room where Abu Al-Hassan was sleeping, so that he might see and hear without being noticed by any. Then Giafar and Masrur entered the chamber, with all the dignitaries and women and slaves of the palace. They ranged themselves in their usual places in a grave silence, as if it were really the khalifat who was about to wake. When all were placed, a slave, who had been instructed beforehand, held a swab of vinegar under Hassan's nose; so that he sneezed once, twice, and thrice, expelling from his nose long filaments which had been collected there by the power of the banj. The slave caught this mucus on a gold plate so that it might not mess the bed; and then wiped Abu's nose and face with rose-water. Abu Al-Hassan came out of his unconsciousness and opened his eyes.

He saw a rare bed, covered with a brocade of scarlet gold starred with pearls; he lifted his eyes and saw a mighty hall with walls and ceiling of satin, with silken hangings, and vases of gold and crystal in all the corners. Then his look travelled downwards and he saw himself surrounded by women and low-bowing slaves of ravishing beauty. Behind them he saw a mass of wazirs, emirs, chamberlains, black eunuchs, and musicians; these last had their fingers poised to accompany a circle of singers raised upon a dais. On a stool by his bedside he saw the garments, mantle,

and turban of the khalifat, and knew them by their colour.

He shut his eyes again; but Giafar went up to him and, after kissing the earth three times, said most respectfully: "O Prince of Believers, allow your slave to waken you, since it is the time of the morning prayer."

Abu Al-Hassan first rubbed his eyes, from right to left and from left to right; then he pinched his arm, gave a yelp of anguish at the pain, and said: "I am not dreaming. I am the khalifat. . . . And yet I think it must be all that drink which I had with the Mosul merchant and the silly things I said to him." He turned his face to the wall and would have slept again; so Giafar approached a second time saying: "O Commander of the Faithful, allow your slave to be surprised at seeing his lord neglect the morning prayer." At the same moment he signed to the musicians, who struck up a concert of harp, lute, and guitar with the harmonious singing of the singers. Abu Al-Hassan looked in the direction of the sound, and said to himself; "Did you ever hear the like when you were asleep, O Abu?" And he sat up, doubting his eyes and not knowing what to think. He put his hands where he could see if they were really there, and said: "Is not this strange? Is not this passing strange? Where are you, O Abu? . Where are you, O son of my mother? Are you awake or dreaming? How long have you been khalifat? How long have you possessed this palace, this bed, these nobles, these eunuchs, these delightful girls, these musicians, these enchanting singers, and those, and these, and those?" At that moment the music ceased and Masrur kissed the earth three times before the bed, saying: "O Commander of the Faithful, allow the least of your slaves

to inform you that the hour of morning prayer has passed and that the time has come to go to the diwan." Abu Al-Hassan was more doubtful than ever, now that he had to do something; so he looked Masrur between the eyes, and asked angrily: "Who are you, you? And who am I?" "You are our master, the Prince of Believers, the khalifat Haroun Al-Rachid, fifth of the line of Abbas, descendant of the uncle of the Prophet (upon whom be prayer and peace!)" answered Masrur most respectfully. "The slave who dares to address you is the pitiful and rightly-disdained nothing, named Masrur, who is honoured by the august charge of bearing the sword of our master's will."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Six-hundred-and-thirtieth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

"SON OF A THOUSAND cuckolds, you lie!" cried Hassan; and Masrur answered: "Indeed, my lord, had another than myself been thus addressed by the khalifat, he would have died of grief; but your old slave, burdened with years of service and more greatly burdened with your manifold kindness, is sure that the Vicar of the Prophet only speaks thus in order to test him. But let not the proof be carried any further, dear master; if some evil dream has troubled your sleep, let the light of morning drive it from you!"

Abu Al-Hassan could contain himself no longer; he fell back on the bed with a shout of laughter and

began to wind himself up in the coverings, kicking his legs in the air. Haroun Al-Rachid, who saw and heard all this from behind the curtain, puffed out his cheeks to prevent himself from laughing.

When Abu Al-Hassan had laughed in this strange position for an hour, he sat up and signed to a little black slave, saying: "Do you know me? Can you tell me who I am?" The little black slave modestly lowered his eyes, and said: "You are our master, Haroun Al-Rachid, Commander of the Faithful, Khalifat of the Prophet (upon whom be prayer and peace!) Vicar on earth of Him who reigns in Heaven." But Abu cried: "You lying, little pitch-face! Son of a thousand pimps, you are not telling the truth!"

Then he turned to one of the young girl slaves, and held out his finger to her, saying: "Bite this!" The child, knowing the khalifat was watching, said to herself: "Here is a chance to show the Prince of Believers that I can help him in his jests." Therefore she bit the finger to the bone, so that Abu Al-Hassan yelled for the pain of it, and cried: "Oh, ah, I am not asleep! Ah, oh, I am certainly not asleep!" Then to the same girl, he said: "Do you know me? Am I what they say?" The slave stretched out her arms, and said: "The name of Allah be upon the khalifat and about him! My lord, you are the Prince of Believers, Haroun Al-Rachid, Vicar of Allah!"

"You are the Vicar of Allah; do you hear that, O Abu, O son of my mother?" cried Hassan, and then to the girl: "You lie, you drab! Do you think you know who I am better than I do?" At that moment the chief eunuch approached the bed and kissed the earth three times, saying: "If our master will pardon me, this is the hour when our master usually goes

to satisfy his need in the cabinet." Passing his arm under Abu's armpit, he helped him from the bed and, even as the young man's feet touched the floor, the hall resounded with the usual salute: "Allah's victory to the khalifat!"

"Is this not marvellous?" said Abu to himself, "Yesterday I was Abu Al-Hassan and now it seems that I am Haroun Al-Rachid. . . . Whoever I am, since this appears to be the time for pissing, let us piss. But I wish I knew if this is the right hour for doing the other thing as well." He was drawn from these reflections by the chief eunuch presenting him with a pair of gold-embroidered slippers, high-heeled and enriched with pearls, which were reserved specially for the cabinet. Abu had never seen such things in his life, so he slipped them both into one of his large sleeves, thinking that they were a costly present from someone.

The beholders had so far restrained their mirth but, at this, some turned their heads and others, pretending to kiss the earth, fell in convulsions of laughter on the carpet. Behind the curtain the khalifat fell over violently on his side.

Sustaining Abu Al-Hassan by the shoulder, the chief eunuch led him to a privy paved with marble and, like all the rest of the palace, richly carpeted. Then he brought him back among the women and nobles in the bedchamber and, passing with him between the two files of them, gave his master into the care of the slaves of the bedchamber. These took off Abu's night clothes and gave him a basin of rose-water for his ablutions. When he had washed, sniffing eagerly at the perfumed water all the while, they clad him in royal robes, set the crown upon his head, and placed in his hand the gold sceptre of the khalifat.

“Am I or am I not Abu Al-Hassan?” thought Abu; but, after a moment’s reflection, he shouted in a loud voice so that all might hear: “I am not Abu Al-Hassan! Who says I am Abu Al-Hassan shall be impaled! I am myself, I am Haroun Al-Rachid!”

“March!” he cried in a tone of assured command; and followed the procession of his subjects to the throne-room. With Masrur’s help he mounted the throne amid universal acclamation and, placing the sceptre across his knees, looked about him. He saw his people ranged in good order in front of the hall’s forty doors; he saw guards with shining swords, wazirs, emirs, nobles, and ambassadors; among the silent surge of faces he recognised Giafar, Abu Nowas, Al-Ijli, Al-Rakashi, Ibdan, Al-Sakar, Omar Al-Tartis, Abu Ishak, and Jadim.

While his glance swept these faces, Giafar advanced at the head of certain splendidly clad nobles and, taking a great sheaf of papers from below his mantle, the day’s petitions, began to read them aloud. Although Abu Al-Hassan knew nothing of such things he showed no embarrassment; he gave judgment in every matter with such tact and justice that the khali-fat, who was already hidden behind another curtain, marvelled to hear him.

When Giafar had finished his report, Abu asked for his chief of police; and when Ahmad-the-Moth was pointed out to him, bade him approach. Ahmad came forth from his place with becoming gravity and prostrated himself before the throne. But Abu bade him rise, and said to him: “Chief of our police, take ten guards with you and go instantly to such a house in such a street in such a quarter! There you will find a detestable swine, who is the sheikh of that quarter, and, with him, two dogs as evil as himself. Arrest

all three and, as a foretaste of what is to come, give them each four hundred strokes on the soles of their feet! . . .”

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Six-hundred-and-thirty-second Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

“DRESS THEM IN RAGS and set them on a scabby camel, their faces to its tail; lead them throughout all the quarters of the city and have this cried before them: ‘Such is the beginning of the punishment for slander, for soiling women, for gossip to the hurt of honest men!’ After that you will impale the sheikh through the mouth, as it is by the mouth he sinned and also as he has no anus; then throw his rotten body to the dogs. Take the smooth man with yellow eyes, the baser of the two companions, and drown him in the privy ditch of one Abu Al-Hassan, a neighbour. Though the second companion is a jester and very foolish, you shall only punish him in this way: get a skilled carpenter to make a chair which will fly to pieces each time the man sits down on it, and then condemn the jester to keep on sitting down for the rest of his life.”

Ahmad-the-Moth, who had been warned beforehand to carry out any command of Abu Al-Hassan, put his hand to his head as a sign that that member would answer for any disobedience and, kissing the earth a second time, left the hall.

The khalifat was delighted at seeing Abu Al-Hassan

acquit himself so gravely in the duties of kingship. He watched while his substitute judged, appointed, dismissed, and saw to the business of the realm with a profound discretion. When Ahmad-the-Moth returned, Abu asked if his orders had been carried out, and the chief of police, prostrating himself again, gave a paper into his hands. This was none other than the legal process of execution, signed by lawyers and men well-esteemed in the quarter. "I am satisfied," said Abu Al-Hassan, "That is the punishment I decree for all slanderers, soilers of women, and those who interfere with the affairs of others."

Then Abu signed to his chief treasurer, and said to him: "Take a bag filled with a thousand golden dinars into that quarter from which the chief of police has just returned, and find out the house of one Abu Al-Hassan. You will have no difficulty in arriving at the place, for any one will direct you to the house of a man so known and loved. You will enter the house and beg to be allowed to speak to the venerable mother of that man; when you have saluted her with the regard due to her excellence, you will say: 'O mother of Abu Al-Hassan, our master the khalifat sends you this bag of a thousand golden dinars. The sum is unworthy of your acceptance, but, for the moment, the treasury is empty and the khalifat regrets that he can do no more for you today.' When you have put the bag into her hands, return and bring me an account of your mission." The chief treasurer hastened to execute this command.

Abu Al-Hassan signed to Giafar that the diwan was over, and Giafar repeated that sign to the wazirs, emirs, chamberlains, and others, who all abased themselves before the throne and went out in order. When Giafar and Masrur alone remained, they assisted Abu

to rise from the throne and, each supporting him by an arm, led him to the harem, where the day's feast had been prepared. There, women took their places at his side and led him into the eating hall.

Abu Al-Hassan heard a ravishing concerted sound of lutes and flutes, hautbois and clarinet, and the fresh voices of girls singing. "I can no longer doubt," he said to himself, "I am most certainly Haroun Al-Rachid. I see and hear, smell and walk; I hold the process of those three men's execution, I find honour and respect at every step; therefore I am not dreaming, therefore I am the khalifat."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Six-hundred-and-thirty-fourth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

LOOKING TO RIGHT and left, he became even more fixed in the certitude of his royalty, for he saw that he was in the middle of a gold hall whose carpeting and hangings were delightfully picked out in all coloured designs. Seven gold lustres, each with seven branches, gave light from the azure ceiling; and, in the middle of the apartment, seven great trays of solid gold, resting upon stools, dulcified the air with the amber and spices of their meats. Beside these trays waited seven girls of incomparable beauty, dressed in robes of varying tint and form, and each held a fan ready to refresh Abu Al-Hassan.

Abu had eaten nothing since the day before; therefore he sat down eagerly before the dishes, while the

seven girls fanned the air about him. As he was unused to so much wind when he was eating, he looked at each damsel in turn with a gracious smile, and said: "I think that one fan will be enough. Tell that negress to fan me, and come and sit down beside me." He ranged them all in a half circle so that wherever he cast his eyes he might see something delightful, and then began to eat. But soon he saw that the girls did not dare to touch the food out of respect; therefore he pressed them to help themselves without restraint and offered them chosen morsels with his own hands. Then he asked them their names, and they replied: "We are called Musk, Throat-of-Alabaster, Roseleaf, Pomegranate-Heart, Coral-Lips, Clove, and Sugarcane." "As Allah lives," cried Abu, "the names are suitable; nor are musk, alabaster, rose, pomegranate, coral, clove, or sugarcane, at all diminished by association with your beauties." In this way he continued to speak so exquisitely to them during the repast, that the khalifat congratulated himself more and more on having found this jest.

When the meats were finished, the girls called eunuchs to bring in water, and themselves knelt before Abu, serving him with a gold basin and perfumed napkins. Then they helped him to rise and accompanied him to a door where the eunuchs pulled aside a large curtain, exposing a second chamber furnished with fruits upon gold plates. After that they intrusted him to the eunuchs and retired.

Abu Al-Hassan found this hall more beautiful than the first and, when he sat down, was delighted by a second concert of singing and lute playing. On the gold dishes were ten alternate levels of rare and exquisite fruits and beside each of the dishes, which were seven, stood a girl with a fan, fairer and more

richly habited than those who had kept him company at meat. Abu made them sit about him and served them himself with fruit. When he asked and obtained their names, he paid appropriate compliments, handing a fig to one, a grape to another, a slice of melon to a third, a banana to a fourth. Thus the khalifat rejoiced more and more in his quality.

When Abu had tasted all the fruits, he rose and went into a third hall, more dream-like in its magnificence than either of the other two.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Six-hundred-and-thirty-sixth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THIS WAS THE HALL of sweetmeats, where were seven great trays, beneath seven lustres, and flanked by seven girls; on each tray were a multitude of crystal vessels and basins of rosy glass, containing every colour and taste of conserve. There were liquid jams and dry, there were leaved cakes, there was every pastry known to man. Amid a fresh outpouring of music, Abu Al-Hassan tasted a little of these scented sweets and paid compliments as sweet to the names of the girls who bore him company. Then he was introduced into the hall of drinks, which was more surprising than the other three put together. There were seven gold trays lighted by seven lustres of gold and heaped with a symmetrical arrangement of flagons and rare bottles; hidden musicians played and sang, and the girls beside the dishes were not dressed

in heavy robes, as their sisters had been in the other halls, but were simply covered with chemises of light silk. The first girl was brown, the second black, the third white; the fourth was yellow-haired, the fifth was fat, the sixth was lean, and the tresses of the seventh were a bright red. Abu Al-Hassan gazed upon them with all the more pleasure since the texture of their garments hid nothing from him; in great delight he bade them sit beside him and pour drink. As each presented the cup he asked her name and, as he drained the wine, took from her a kiss, a bite, or a wandering of fingers in the thigh. He played in this way until the infant began to cry; and then he bade any one of the seven who cared, to take charge of the inconvenient child. All threw themselves upon the nursling at the same time and would have tended it; first one got hold of it and then another, with laughter and excited cries, until the infant suddenly went to sleep again in the bosom of its father.

The khalifat silently enjoyed this scene and thanked the lucky destiny which had set him upon the way of so diverting a fellow. But very soon one of the girls, who had received instructions from Giafar, secretly threw a pinch of soporific powder into the cup and presented it to Abu, saying: "O Prince of Believers, I pray you drink this cup, for perhaps it will wake the child." "Certainly, by Allah," answered Abu laughing; and, after draining the wine, turned to speak with her who had poured it; but his mouth opened in a prodigious yawn and he fell head over heels upon the carpets.

The khalifat, who had been waiting for this second sleep, rolled out from behind the curtain, for he could not stand because of his laughter. He ordered slaves to strip Abu Al-Hassan of his royal robes and put

his own garments upon him. Then he called the slave who had brought Abu to the palace and ordered him to carry him back to his own house and lay him upon the bed. "For," said the khalifat to himself, "if this goes on any longer, either I will die of laughing, or he, poor fellow, will go mad." The slave took Abu Al-Hassan on his back and, carrying him out through the secret door, bore him to his own house; there he disposed him on his bed and departed; taking care, this time, to shut the door.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Six-hundred-and-thirty-seventh Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

ABU AL-HASSAN LAY in deep sleep until the noon of the following day and did not wake until the effects of the banj were entirely worn off. Before he opened his eyes, he thought: "On reflection, I prefer Sugar-cane, then Coral-Lips; and Pearl-Cluster, the blond, only third, though she did give me that last cup." Then aloud, he called: "Come, my girls: Sugar-cane, Coral-Lips, Pearl-Cluster, Dawn, Morning-Star, Musk, Throat-of-Alabaster, Pomegranate-Heart, Apple-blossom, Roseleaf! Come, my dears, come quickly! Yesterday I was a little tired, but today the child is very well indeed."

He waited for a moment, and then as no one ran to answer his calling, became very angry, and sat up with open eyes . . . He saw that he was in his own poor chamber, and not in that splendid palace from

which, the day before, he had governed all the world; therefore he thought that he was dreaming, and cried: "Giafar, Giafar, you son of a dog! Masrur, you pimp, where are you?"

His old mother ran in, in answer to these cries, asking: "What is the matter, my son? The name of Allah upon you and about you! What dream have you had, O Abu Al-Hassan?" "Who are you, old woman?" cried her son, "And who is this Abu Al-Hassan?" Then the old woman said: "As Allah lives, I am your mother; you are Abu Al-Hassan, my dear child. What are these strange words; why do you appear not to recognise me?" But Abu cried: "Begone, O woman of ill-omen! You are speaking to the Commander of the Faithful, Haroun Al-Rachid! Begone from before the face of Allah's Vicar upon earth!" The poor mother began to beat herself in the face, exclaiming: "The name of Allah be about you, my child! For pity's sake, do not raise your voice in such foolish and dangerous remarks, if the neighbours hear you, we shall be lost. Calm yourself, calm yourself!" But Hassan shouted the more: "I told you to be gone, execrable old woman! You are mad to mistake me for your son; I am Haroun Al-Rachid, Prince of Believers, master of the East and West!"

Hassan's mother redoubled the blows upon herself, and moaned: "Allah confound the wiles of the Evil One! May His infinite mercy free you from your diabolic possession! How can you be so mad? Do you not see that you are in your own poor chamber, in the house where you have lived from birth with me, your mother? Cast out these dangerous dreams, my child, and drink a little of the water from this cup."

Abu Al-Hassan drank a little of the water, saying

to himself: "It is possible that I am Abu Al-Has-san." He reflected, head in hand, for an hour; and then spoke heavily, as one who comes out of a dream: "It is possible that I am Abu Al-Hassan. I am Abu Al-Hassan, this is my room, you are my mother, and I am your son. I am Abu Al-Hassan. What sorcery has been at work upon me?"

The old woman wept for joy, thinking that her son was cured, and, after drying her eyes, was about to prepare food for him and question him concerning his dream, when Abu suddenly bounded out of bed and began to shake her like a madman, crying: "Vile old woman, if you do not wish me to kill you, tell me at once which of my enemies dethroned me and shut me in this miserable kennel! When I return to my throne, my anger will be terrible! Beware the vengeance of your khalifat! I, even I, Haroun Al-Rachid, will terribly punish those who have done this thing." He let go of the old woman, and she fell in a heap upon the mat, sobbing as if her heart would break, while Abu jumped back into bed and held his tumultuous head between his hands.

In a little while the old woman rose up and, because she loved her son, brought him syrup and rose-water and persuaded him to drink it. Then, to change the course of his thoughts, she said: "I have an interesting thing to tell you, my child, one that will please you very much. Yesterday the chief of police arrested the shiekh of this quarter and his two companions; he gave each four hundred strokes on the soles of his feet and led them backwards on a scabby camel through the hooting and spitting of the whole city. Finally, he impaled the shiekh through the mouth, cast his first companion into the ditch of our privy, and condemned the third to a very complicated punish-

ment, which, I think, consisted in sitting down for ever on a chair which always gave under him."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Six-hundred-and-thirty-ninth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THIS INTELLIGENCE, INSTEAD of calming Abu Al-Hassan, further persuaded him of his royalty. "Evil hag," he cried to his mother, "you prove me right out of your own mouth; for I myself sent Ahmad-the-Moth to punish those three rascals. Do not dare to tell me again that I have been dreaming or that I am possessed by the breath of Satan; rather prostrate yourself before my glory, kiss the earth between my hands, and ask pardon for your ill-considered words."

His mother no longer doubted that Abu was mad. "May Allah in His pity send down the dew of blessing upon your head!" she cried, "May He pardon you and give you grace to become a reasonable man once more! For my sake, do not speak the word khalifat again; and, especially, do not apply it to yourself; for, if the neighbours carry what you say to the wali, he will hang you at the palace gate." So saying, the woman wept again and beat her breast in despair.

This sight exasperated Abu Al-Hassan still further. He seized a stick and fell upon his mother, crying furiously: "I forbid you to call me Abu Al-Hassan! I am Haroun Al-Rachid; if you deny it again, my stick shall prove it to you." The old woman trembled with fear and indignation, but she did not forget that Abu

was her son; she assumed her kindest voice, and said to him: "Dear child, I cannot think that your soul has been so snatched from the law of Allah and His Prophet that you can raise your hand against the mother who bore you nine months in her bosom and fed you with the milk of her tenderness. You are wrong to let your reason confound itself in dreams and to claim a title which belongs only to the Commander of the Faithful, Haroun Al-Rachid. It is not only dangerous; it is ungrateful. Yesterday the khali-fat sent his chief treasurer to our house and gave me a bag containing a thousand golden dinars, with an assurance that there would be more to come."

Abu Al-Hassan lost any last doubts which he might have entertained, because he remembered that he himself had sent his treasurer with the money. He looked at his mother with great menacing eyes, and cried: "Will you deny that it was I who sent the gold, will you contend that the treasurer was acting under any orders but mine? Do you still dare to call me your son and say that I am Abu Al-Hassan the Eccentric?" Then, as the old woman stopped her ears against these words, the distracted Abu began to beat her with the stick.

There are limits even to a mother's love; the old woman yelled indignantly for help: "O neighbours, neighbours! O great calamity! Hasten, O Mussulmans!" Abu laid on his stick more furiously, panting: "Am I, or am I not, Commander of the Faithful?" But, in spite of the blows, the old woman answered: "You are my son. You are Abu Al-Hassan, the Eccentric."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Six-hundred-and-fortieth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

AS THEY THUS struggled, the neighbours rushed into the room, came between mother and son, snatched the stick from Abu's hand, and indignantly pinioned him. "Have you gone mad, Abu Al-Hassan, that you dare to lift your hand against your poor old mother?" they demanded, "Have you forgotten the teaching of the Book?" Abu's eyes sparkled with fury, as he cried: "Who is Abu Al-Hassan? Would you apply that name to me?" The neighbours at once became perplexed, and asked: "What is that? Are you not Abu Al-Hassan the Eccentric? Is this not the mother who brought you up and fed you with the milk of her tenderness?" "Dogs and sons of dogs, begone from my presence!" answered Abu, "I am your master, the khalifat Haroun Al-Rachid, the Prince of Believers!"

Thus the neighbours were assured of Abu's madness and, not wishing to leave him free in the blindness of his misfortune, they tied him hand and foot, and sent for the porter of the madhouse. In less than an hour the porter came with two strong guards, carrying a bull's hide whip and a great assortment of chains and manacles. Abu Al-Hassan struggled violently on seeing them; so the porter gave him two or three cracks over the shoulder with his whip and then loaded him with chains. Without paying attention to his protestations and the title of khalifat which he gave himself, the three men carried him to the madhouse, while, all along the way, the people kicked

him and struck him with their fists, thinking that he was really mad.

At the madhouse they shut him, like a wild beast, in an iron cage and gave him fifty lashes with the bull's hide as a first step towards his cure. He received the same treatment morning and evening; so that after ten days he changed his skin like a snake. This brought a revolution in his ideas, and he said to himself: "I am in sorry case! I must be mistaken, since all the world treats me as mad; I must have dreamed that I was in the palace; and yet it did not seem like a dream. But, if I try to understand this mystery, I may go mad in very truth. This is not the only matter which Allah has made too difficult for man." While he was thus considering, his mother came weeping to see how he did and lamented very sorely when she saw him brought so low. In a little she mastered her grief and greeted him gently; Abu Al-Hassan answered her calmly, saying: "The blessing and mercy of Allah be upon you, dear mother." The old woman rejoiced, and answered: "The name of Allah be about you, dear child! Thanks be to Him who has given you back your reason and restored your wounded mind!" "I ask pardon from Allah and from you, my mother," said Abu sincerely, "I do not understand how I came to say all those foolish things and to behave thus insanely towards you. Satan must have possessed me and urged me on; had it been other than myself, he might have gone even further. But all that is finished and I am cured again." His mother's tears of grief were changed to tears of joy. "My heart is as light, dear child," she said, "as if I had born you again! Blessed be the name of Allah to all eternity!"

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Six-hundred-and-forty-first Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

“YOU HAVE NOTHING to reproach yourself with, my son,” she added, “The fault was with that merchant whom you asked to eat and drink with you and who left the next morning without shutting the door behind him. Every time a door stands open before sunrise, Satan enters that house and takes possession of the minds of those who lie within. Let us thank Allah that the result was not a great deal worse.” “You are right mother,” answered Abu, “I was most certainly possessed by Satan. I warned the Mosul merchant to shut the door behind him; but he forgot to do so, and thus brought all our troubles on us. Now that I know the extravagance of my mind has passed, I beg you, O tender mother, to speak to the doorkeeper of this madhouse, that I may be delivered from my cage and daily afflictions.” Hassan’s mother went immediately and told the porter that her son had recovered his reason. The man came and, after he had examined and questioned him, receiving sensible answers, knocked off Hassan’s fetters and set him free from his cage. Hassan returned slowly to his house on legs which might hardly bear him, and stayed in bed for many days until his strength had come back and the scars of his blows were a little healed. After that he began to weary of his solitude and determined to go at sunset, as of old, to sit at the end of the bridge and invite any stranger whom Fate might send to him.

The evening on which he put his plan into execution was the first of the month, that upon which Haroun Al-Rachid was accustomed to leave his palace in the disguise of a merchant and, while searching for adventure in the streets of his city, see for himself whether good order reigned within it. Thus it was that Haroun came to that part of the bridge where Abu Al-Hassan sat, and the latter, looking up, saw the Mosul merchant coming towards him, followed as before by a mighty slave.

Either because he considered the merchant the cause of all his troubles or because of his oath never to recognize his former guests, he looked out over the river to avoid a greeting; but the khalifat, who had kept himself informed through spies of all which had happened to Abu, including his sojourn in the madhouse, was by no means inclined to let slip this chance of jesting again with his strange acquaintance. Also Haroun Al-Rachid, being generous and tender-hearted, was determined to reward Abu Al-Hassan in some way or another for the pleasure he had given him. Therefore he went up to Abu and leaned his head over the other's shoulder, looking into his eyes, and saying: "Greeting, O my friend, Abu Al-Hassan! My soul desires to embrace you." But Abu answered, with his eyes still fixed upon the river: "I have no greeting for you; walk on, I know you not." "What is this, O Abu," cried the khalifat, "do you not recognise your guest?" "As Allah lives, I do not recognise you," replied the other, "Begone upon your way." But Al-Rachid insisted, saying: "I recognise you very well. I cannot believe that you can have utterly forgotten me, when only a month has passed since that delightful evening which we spent together at your house." Then, as Abu still did not answer and only

signed to him to begone, he threw his arm about his neck, and continued: "This is an ill jest, my brother. I have made up my mind not to leave you until you have taken me a second time to your house and told me why you are angry with me. I see that you have something with which to reproach me." Then Abu Al-Hassan cried indignantly: "O face of ill-omen, do you expect me to take you to my house again after all the harm which you have done me? Begone, and let me see your back!" The khalifat embraced him again, saying: "O my friend, Abu Al-Hassan, you are very hard on me! If my visit was really a cause of misfortune to you, be very sure that the fault was unwitting and that I am ready to make all amends. Tell me what happened and I will find some remedy." So saying he squatted down beside the unwilling Abu on the bridge, and, hanging his arm brotherly about the other's neck, waited for an answer.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Six-hundred-and-forty-third Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

ABU AL-HASSAN WAS a little won over by these caresses, and said: "I am willing enough to tell you the strange things which happened after that evening of ours and all the misfortunes which followed your failure to shut the door." Then he told the khalifat of those adventures in the palace which he had at first thought real and later considered as an illusion of the devil; he made him acquainted with all his sufferings

at the madhouse and with the scandalous reputation which he had now gained among his neighbours. He left out no single detail and put such vehemence and credulity into the recital of his supposed possession by the Evil One, that the khalifat could not help laughing aloud. Abu Al-Hassan could not understand this laugh, and asked: "Are you so wanting in sympathy for my misfortunes that you find them amusing, or do you imagine that I am fooling you with some fiction? If you do not believe me, I can settle your doubts with instant proof." So saying, he drew up his sleeves and bared his shoulders, back, and bottom, to show the scars and discolorations left by the bull's hide on his body.

At this sight the khalifat became truly sorry for the unfortunate Abu and, putting aside all thought of raillery, embraced him with real affection, saying: "My brother, I beg you, in Allah's name, to take me to your house again, for I am greatly desirous of tasting your delightful hospitality once more. You will see that He will return your generosity a thousandfold tomorrow." He went on talking so pleasantly and embraced Abu so affectionately that at last he broke down the latter's resolution never to entertain the same guest twice. But as they went along, Abu Al-Hassan said: "Though I give way to your importunities, it is with considerable regret. I ask you in return to do me one favour: to remember the door when you go out tomorrow morning." Stiffing a laugh internally, the khalifat swore that he would shut the door, and kept up a pleasant conversation until they reached the house.

When they had entered and were a little rested, the slave served them with food and afterwards with drink. With their cups in their hands they chatted

on of one thing and another, until the drink had began to move within their reasons. Then the khalifat adroitly steered the talk towards love, and asked his host whether he had ever been violently drawn towards women, whether he was married, or whether he had always remained chaste. "Until recently, my master," answered Abu, "I only loved gay companions, fine meat, old wine, and suave perfumes; and knew nothing in life better than to talk, cup in hand, with my dear friends. But this does not mean that I could not appreciate a woman, especially if she were like one of those extraordinary girls whom Satan showed me during that fantastic dream which made me mad; one of those ever laughing girls, a singer and musician, one skilled in dancing and calming the little child of our inheritance; one who would study our pleasure and consecrate her life to pleasing. If ever I were to meet such a girl again, I would buy her from her father and marry her and love her dearly. But her kind only exists in the khalifat's palace or possibly in the abode of his wazir, Giafar. That is why I prefer the society of passing friends and these old bottles, to risking the savour of my whole life on the bad humour and imperfection of some ordinary woman. My present life is calm and, if ever I become poor, I shall at least have the consolation of eating that black bread alone."

So saying, Abu Al-Hassan drained the cup which the khalifat handed to him and fell head over heels upon the carpet; for Haroun Al-Rachid had again mingled powdered Cretan banj with his host's wine. At a sign from his master, the tall slave took Abu Al-Hassan upon his back and left the house. The khalifat, who followed, shut the door carefully this time, as he had no intention of sending Abu back to

his house. They came to the palace and passed silently in by the secret door which led them to the private apartments of the khalifat.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Six-hundred-and-forty-fourth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THE KHALIFAT HAD Abu Al-Hassan dressed in his own night clothes and placed upon the royal bed as before; he gave the same orders and bade Masrur wake him early, before the hour of prayer. Then he lay down and slept in a neighbouring room.

Next morning at the given hour Masrur woke the khalifat, who made his way to the room where Abu Al-Hassan lay drugged, and called in to him all the girls whom Abu had found in the different chambers where he feasted on that other occasion. Also he summoned his musicians and singers and, arranging all in good order, gave them their instructions. Then, while vinegar was being applied to the sleeper's nostrils (a remedy which again brought forth the snot from his nose in a great sneeze) he hid behind his curtain and gave an agreed signal.

At once the singers mingled their delightful voices with the notes of harps and flutes, as sweetly as the angels sing in Paradise. Abu Al-Hassan, coming out of his swoon, at first listened a little to the music with closed eyes and then, staring about him, recognised in a flash the bed, the room, the curtains and ornaments, and, above all, the twenty-eight girls whom

he had seen, seven by seven, in the delightful halls of his dream. He sat up with starting eyes and rubbed his face with his hands to be sure that he was awake.

At this the concert ceased, even as the khalifat had commanded, and a great silence reigned in the chamber. All the women modestly lowered their eyes before the august glances of Abu Al-Hassan, who bit his fingers, and cried: "Woe upon you, O Abu, O son of my mother! Today the illusion; but tomorrow the bull's hide and the chains, the madhouse and the cage. O infamous merchant of Mosul, may you stifle in the arms of your Master in the deeps of Hell! You have left the door open again. The Evil One has turned my brain over upon itself, making me see the same extravagant things. Allah confound you, O Satan, and all the tools of Satan, and especially all merchants from Mosul! May the city of Mosul fall entirely upon its inhabitants and crush them for ever beneath its ruins!" Then he shut his eyes and opened them again, and shut them and opened them, and cried: "O unfortunate Al-Hassan, you had better go quietly to sleep again and not wake until the Evil One has left your body. You know what will happen tomorrow if you take any notice of these girls." So saying he cast himself back upon the bed and wound the coverlet about his head; to give himself the illusion that he slept he began to snore like a rutting camel or a herd of drinking buffaloes.

The khalifat almost stifled behind his curtain to see and hear these things.

Poor Abu Al-Hassan could not sleep; for young Sugarcane, who had been his favourite, sat down on the side of the bed in which he lay grunting, and said gently: "O Commander of the Faithful, I have to

inform your highness that it is time for the morning prayer." An angry voice cried in answer, from below the coverlet: "Allah's curse upon the Evil One! Satan, begone!" But Sugarcane calmly continued: "Doubtless the Prince of Believers is suffering from some unpleasant dream. I am not Satan, my lord; I am little Sugarcane. May the Evil One indeed be far from you! I am little Sugarcane, O Commander of the Faithful."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Six-hundred-and-forty-fifth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

ABU AL-HASSAN OPENED his eyes and threw back the coverlet; he saw little Sugarcane sitting on the side of the bed and the other girls whom he knew standing in three ranks before him: Roseleaf, Throat-of-Alabaster, Pearl-Cluster, Morning-Star, Dawn, Musk, Pomegranate-Heart, Coral-Lips, Clove, and the rest. He rubbed his eyes as if he would drive them into his head, and cried: "Who are you? Who am I?" They answered in chorus on different notes: "Glory to our master the khalifat Haroun Al-Rachid, Prince of Believers and king of the whole world!" "I am not Abu Al-Hassan the Eccentric?" demanded the astonished Abu; and they replied in chorus, as before: "May the Evil One be far from you! You are not Abu Al-Hassan, but the very Father of Beauty; you are our lord and the crown upon our heads!" "This time I must make certain," said Abu; and he bade Sugar-

cane draw near him. "Bite my ear, little one," he said; and Sugarcane sank her white teeth so cruelly into his ear that he yelled terribly: "I am the Commander of the Faithful! I am Haroun Al-Rachid!"

At once the instruments struck up a dance tune and the singers broke into a lively song; the girls took hands and lifted quick feet about the bed, singing the song's chorus with such maddening grace that Abu Al-Hassan threw the bed coverings one way and the cushions another, cast his nightcap into the air, leaped from the bed, tore off all his clothes, and threw himself among the girls, his zebb well forward and his bottom bare; leaping, twisting, contorting, shaking his belly, his zebb, and his bottom, in a storm of growing laughter. He played the fool so exquisitely that the khalifat could no longer contain himself and sent out peal after peal of laughter from behind the curtain, so loud that they subdued the singing and the dancing, and the mirth and the drums, the stringed instruments, the wind instruments, and all the tumult of the dance. Then he was taken with hiccoughs and, falling over on his backside, well-nigh lost consciousness. When he could struggle to his feet, he thrust his head round the curtain, crying: "Abu Al-Hassan, O Abu Al-Hassan, have you sworn to kill me?"

The dance stopped suddenly, the girls were frozen in their places, and so great a silence fell that the dropping of a needle would have echoed like thunder. Abu Al-Hassan stopped as the others had done and turned his head towards the voice. As soon as his eyes fell upon the khalifat, he recognised him as the Mosul merchant and a realisation of the whole truth flashed across his mind like lightning. Though he guessed the riddle of the jest which had been played upon him, he was in no wise abashed; instead, he pre-

tended not to know the khalifat and walked towards him, crying: "So there you are, O merchant of my bum; I will teach you to leave doors open!" The khalifat roared with laughter and answered: "By my sacred ancestors, O Abu Al-Hassan, my brother, I swear that I will grant the whole wish of your soul, to pay you for your pains! Henceforth you shall be a kinsman to me in my palace." He clasped Abu to his breast and embraced him with great delight.

Then the khalifat bade the girls clothe Abu Al-Hassan in garments from his special wardrobe, choosing the richest and rarest of all. When Abu was dressed, Haroun Al-Rachid said to him: "Now speak: for all that you require shall be given to you." Abu Al-Hassan kissed the earth between the khalifat's hands, and answered: "I beg my generous master to allow me to live ever in the shadow of his majesty." Haroun was deeply moved by the delicacy of this request. "Such disinterested friendship is very dear to me, Abu," he replied, "Not only do I choose you from this moment to be my cup companion and my brother, but I allow you free entrance and departure about the palace at any hour of the day or night. You need never ask an audience or leave to go. I proclaim also that the apartment of Zobeida, daughter of my uncle, shall not be forbidden to you as it is to others. When I enter there, you may come to me at any hour."

At the same time, the khalifat assigned to Abu Al-Hassan a splendid lodging in the palace and gave him ten thousand golden dinars as the first instalment of a pension. Promising to see that he never lacked for anything, he left him and proceeded to the diwan.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Six-hundred-and-forty-seventh Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

ABU AL-HASSAN RAN without a moment's delay to his mother and told her all that had happened, explaining that it was the khalifat himself who had played all these tricks upon him as a jest. "Allah be thanked," said he, "for all has turned to our advantage." Promising to come and visit her every day, he returned to the palace, while the noise of his adventure and new position quickly went throughout the city and reached the furthest provinces of the kingdom.

The favour which he enjoyed from the khalifat only increased the gaiety and jovial humour of Abu Al-Hassan; it did not make him arrogant and unaccommodating. Each day he diverted the khalifat and all who were about the palace with the sallies of his wit and the perfection of his pleasantry. Haroun Al-Rachid could not be parted from him and therefore took him into his own private apartments and into those of Zobeida: a favour which was not even accorded to Giafar. Zobeida soon noticed that, on every occasion when Abu Al-Hassan accompanied the khalifat into her presence, he fixed his eyes steadfastly on one of her women, a girl called Sugarcane, and that the little girl reddened with pleasure beneath these glances. One day she said to her husband: "O Commander of the Faithful, doubtless you have seen, as I have seen, signs of love between Abu Al-Hassan and little Sugarcane. What do you think of a marriage for the two?" "The thing is possible," he answered, "I see nothing against it. I have indeed thought of

it for some time; but lately the affairs of my kingdom drove the idea from my head. I am all the more annoyed, as I promised to find Abu a wife during my second evening at his house. I think Sugarcane will do very well. Now it only remains to question them."

They called Abu Al-Hassan and Sugarcane, and asked them if they wished to be married. Sugarcane contented herself with blushing violently and throwing herself at Zobeida's feet to kiss her robe as a sign of thanks. But Abu Al-Hassan answered: "O Commander of the Faithful, your slave is drowned deep in the sea of your generosity; but, before he takes into his house this delightful girl with the promising name, he would wish our mistress Zobeida to ask her one question . . ." "What question is that?" demanded Zobeida smiling, and he replied: "Dear mistress, I would like to know if her tastes are the same as mine. I confess that I only care for gaiety after wine, pleasure in meat, the joy of singing, and the delight of poetry. If Sugarcane loves these things also, if she is sensitive and will never say no to you know what, dear mistress, I will consent to love her with a mighty love. If not, by Allah I will remain a bachelor!" Zobeida turned laughing to Sugarcane and said: "You have heard all that. What is your reply?" And Sugarcane nodded her head.

The khalifat sent at once for the kadi and witnesses, and these wrote out the marriage contract. Feasts of rejoicing were given at the palace for thirty days and nights, and, after that, husband and wife were able to take joy of each other in all tranquillity. They passed their time in eating, drinking, and laughter, spending uncounted gold. Dishes for meats and fruits, dishes for pastries and wine-cups, were never empty in their house; each moment of their lives bore the clear im-

print of joy. Thus it was that a time came when they had spent all their money on pleasure; and, as the khalifat, owing to the weighty affairs of his kingdom, had forgotten to fix a regular pension for Abu, they woke one morning without enough money to pay their bills. They were very unhappy, especially as discretion forbade them to ask anything from the khalifat or of Zobeida. They reflected with lowered heads and at last Abu Al-Hassan said: "We have been very wasteful! I do not wish to risk the shame of asking for money, nor do I desire that you should ask it. I have decided on another course, O Sugarcane." His wife sighed, saying: "What is your plan? I am ready to help you, for we cannot beg and we cannot change our mode of life." Then said Abu Al-Hassan: "I know that you would always help me, dear Sugarcane . . . There is only one way out of our difficulty." "Tell me quickly what it is," said she; and he replied: "We must die."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Six-hundred-and-forty-eighth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

SUGARCANE CRIED OUT in a fright: "As Allah lives, I do not want to die! You will have to carry out that plan without my help." Abu Al-Hassan did not grow angry. "Daughter of a woman," he said, "when I was a bachelor I knew that to live alone was the only life; your lack of sense confirms me in that opinion. If, instead of answering up so quickly, you had taken

the trouble to ask for particulars, you would have been highly delighted with the form of death which I propose and still propose. Can you not understand that it is a feigned death, and not a real death, which will get us gold?" "How?" asked Sugarcane with a laugh, and he went on: "Listen carefully to what I say: as soon as I am dead, you will wrap me in a winding sheet and lay me in the prescribed position in the middle of this room, with my turban over my face and my feet turned towards the holy Kaaba in Mecca. Then you will utter piercing screams, howl lustily, shed tears ordinary and tears extraordinary, tear your clothes and pretend to tear your hair. When you are properly tear-swept and dishevelled, you will run to Zobeida and tell her, between sobbings and faintings of every suitable kind, that I am dead; then you will fall to the ground and stay there for an hour, not coming to yourself until they have drowned you with rose-water. I promise that you will see a golden river beginning to flow towards our house." "A death like that is very possible," said Sugarcane, "I will help you. But how shall I die?" "Allah will provide for that," said he, "First do exactly as I have told you. Behold: I am dead!" With that he stretched himself out in the middle of the room and died.

Sugarcane undressed him, wound him in a shroud, turned his feet towards Mecca, and put his turban over his face. Then, as she had been bidden, she uttered piercing cries and shed tears ordinary and extraordinary. She tore her clothes, pulled at her hair, and scratched her cheeks. When her locks were all scattered and her face as yellow as saffron, she presented herself before Zobeida and fell at full length in front of her, with a groan which would have broken the heart of a rock.

Zobeida, who had already heard the screams and cries of grief from far off, guessed at once that death had had his will of her favourite's husband. Compassionately she cared for the young girl, taking her upon her knees and recalling her to life; but Sugarcane went on groaning and weeping, tearing her hair and beating her breast as she murmured the name of Abu Al-Hassan over and over again. At last she was able to tell the queen in broken words that he had died during the night of indigestion. "Nothing remains but death for me," she sobbed, with a final blow upon her breast, "but may Allah by so much the more prolong the days of our dear mistress." Then she fell back again and fainted for very grief.

All the women began to lament about her and to mourn for Abu Al-Hassan, who in his life had so pleasantly diverted them. They assured Sugarcane, as she lay there drowned in rose-water even as her husband had prophesied, how greatly they sympathised with her dire loss.

Zobeida wept also for Abu Al-Hassan and, after speaking in the usual forms of condolence, called the keeper of the purse and said to her: "Take ten thousand golden dinars from my private chest and carry them to the house of poor Sugarcane, that she may worthily perform her husband's funeral." The treasurer loaded a bag upon the back of a eunuch and accompanied him to the door of Abu Al-Hassan's dwelling.

Zobeida embraced her favourite with many a sweet word of commiseration, and herself led her to the door, saying: "May Allah soften the memory of your affliction, O Sugarcane; may He assuage your wounds and lengthen your life by all the lost years of the poor departed!" Sugarcane wetted the hand of her

mistress with tears and took her lonely way home.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Six-hundred-and-forty-ninth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

SHE ENTERED THE ROOM where Abu Al-Hassan waited for her, still stretched out stiffly in his winding sheet; and, after shutting the door, burst into a pleasant peal of lucky laughter. "Rise up now from among the dead, O father of jest!" she said, "Come and help me drag in the gold. We shall not starve today." Abu Al-Hassan shook off his shroud and, dragging the bag of gold into the middle of the room, began to dance round it on one leg.

Then he congratulated his wife, and added: "But that is not all. It is your turn now to die and mine to get the gold. We will see if I am as clever with the khalifat as you were with Zobeida. It will be as well for Haroun Al-Rachid to know that he is not the only one who can play tricks. But I must not stand here chatting. You are dead!"

Abu Al-Hassan wrapped his wife in the same shroud and arranged her in the middle of the room, with her feet turned towards Mecca. Bidding her not give a sign of life whatever happened, he set his features in grief, half unrolled his turban, rubbed his eyes with onion until great tears started, and ran with torn clothes and disordered beard into the presence of the khalifat. Haroun Al-Rachid held his diwan, surrounded by Giafar, Masrur, and other dignitaries;

when he saw Abu Al-Hassan so changed by affliction from his jovial careless self, he rose from his place in sorry astonishment and ran to him, bidding him tell the reason of his tears. But Abu Al-Hassan only redoubled his sobbing and stood swaying upon his feet, exclaiming from behind his handkerchief: "O Sugarcane, Sugarcane! O evil day! What am I now!"

The khalifat understood that Abu would tell of the death of his wife, and was moved in the extreme. Tears came to his eyes and he laid his arm about the eccentric's shoulder, saying: "Allah have you in His pity, my brother! May He add to your life those days which he has taken from our sweet and charming slave. We gave her to you that she might be a cause of rejoicing and behold, she has led you into the house of grief! Poor Sugarcane!" Haroun Al-Rachid wept warm tears and wiped his eyes with his handkerchief. Giafar and the other wazirs wept warm tears and wiped their eyes with their handkerchiefs.

Then the khalifat called his treasurer and said to him: "Pay over ten thousand dinars to Abu Al-Hassan that he may fitly make the funeral of his wife. Have them carried to his dwelling at once." While the treasurer obeyed, Abu Al-Hassan kissed his master's hand in an ecstasy of grief and took leave in a storm of sobs.

But when he came to the room where Sugarcane lay in her winding sheet, he cried: "Did you think that you were the only one who could get a dinar for every tear? Look at my bag!" He dragged the gold into the middle of the room and, after helping his wife out of her shroud, exclaimed: "That is not all, my dear. Now we must see to it that our trick does not bring down the wrath of the khalifat and Zobeida upon us.

This is what we must do . . .” We will leave him explaining his plan to Sugarcane.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Six-hundred-and-fiftieth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THE KHALIFAT SHORTENED the time of the diwan and took Masrur with him to Zobeida's palace, that they might condole with the queen on the loss of her favourite. Opening the door of her private apartment, he saw his wife stretched upon her bed surrounded by women who dried her eyes and consoled her. He went up to her, saying: “O daughter of my uncle, may the years which poor Sugarcane has lost be added to you.” Zobeida, who had only waited for the coming of the khalifat in order to commiserate with him on the death of Abu Al-Hassan, was astonished by this remark, and said: “May the life of Sugarcane be long, O Commander of the Faithful! It would be fitter for me to join you in your grief. May you live as much longer than your span, as the days of Abu Al-Hassan have been shortened. It is true that you see me sorrowing; but it is for the death of your friend and not for the death of my favourite, who, thanks be to Allah, is in excellent health.”

The khalifat, who had the best of reasons for supposing that he knew the truth, could not help smiling. “By Allah, O Masrur,” he said to the chief eunuch, “what do you think of this? Do you imagine that your mistress, who is usually so wise, has become

absent-minded like other women? I suppose that they are all the same. I come to console her and she tries to sadden me by telling me bad news which she knows to be false. Speak to her yourself and tell her what you have seen and heard. Perhaps she will change her tune and not try to fool us any longer." Said Masrur to Zobeida: "Dear mistress, the Commander of the Faithful is right; Abu Al-Hassan has all his health and strength, though he weeps most bitterly for the loss of his wife who died last night from indigestion. I must tell you that Abu Al-Hassan has but just now left the diwan, where he himself announced the death of Sugarcane. He has returned to his own dwelling, enriched by the generosity of our master with ten thousand dinars for funeral expenses." Instead of convincing Zobeida, these words persuaded her that the khalifat was jesting, and she cried: "This is hardly a day for jokes, O Commander of the Faithful! I know what I am talking about; the keeper of my purse will tell you how much Abu Al-Hassan's funeral is costing me. It would be more seemly if we joined in mourning for your friend than made heartless jokes." The khalifat's anger began to rise and he exclaimed: "What are you saying? By Allah, I think you must be mad! I tell you that Sugarcane is dead; there is no need to argue about it. I will give you proof." He sat down on the diwan and said to Masrur: "Go to Abu Al-Hassan's dwelling and see for yourself (though there is really no need for proof) which of the two is dead. Then return quickly with the news." While Masrur was gone, the khalifat said to Zobeida: "We will soon see which of us is right; but, as you insist on being obstinate when you are obviously wrong, I am willing to have a bet with you." "I accept the bet," she answered, "I will

wager the dearest thing I have in the world, my picture gallery, against anything you like." "Then I will bet my Palace of Delights, which is the dearest thing I have," said Haroun, "and allow me to tell you that my Palace of Delights is infinitely more valuable than your picture gallery." "We need not quarrel about that," said Zobeida in a huff, "If you want to know which is the more valuable you have only to listen to what people say behind your back. Let us bind our wager with the Fatiha." "Yes, let the Koran be between us," agreed the khalifat. So they recited the first chapter of the Book together, and then sat in sulky silence, waiting for the return of Masrur.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Six-hundred-and-fifty-first Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

ABU AL-HASSAN, who had been on the lookout, saw Masrur from afar off and understood the reason of his visit. Therefore he said to Sugarcane: "Dear wife, Masrur is coming straight for our house. He must have been sent on account of an argument which I knew would arise between the khalifat and his queen. Let us first give Haroun the advantage. Go dead again, my dear, that I may wrap you up." Sugarcane stretched herself out once more and Abu arranged her in her former position. Then he sat down beside her with his turban loose and a handkerchief to his eyes. Masrur entered at that moment and, seeing

Sugarcane shrouded in the middle of the room and Abu plunged in despair beside her, could not contain his emotion, but exclaimed: "There is no other god than Allah! I have great grief for you, poor Sugarcane, our sister, O erewhile gentle and delightful! Your destiny weighs heavy on us all. Swift was your summons to return to Him who made you! May He take you into the excellence of His compassion!" He embraced Abu Al-Hassan and sadly took leave, to return with his news to the khalifat; nor was he sorry to prove to Zobeida that she had been both wrong and opinionated when she contradicted her lord.

He came into the chamber where Zobeida waited and kissed the earth between her hands, saying: "Allah prolong the life of our mistress! The dead woman lies shrouded in the middle of the room, her body is already swollen beneath the winding sheet and smells unpleasantly. And I do not think that poor Abu Al-Hassan will long survive his wife."

The khalifat exulted cheerfully at this news; he turned to Zobeida who had become yellow in the face, and said: "O daughter of my uncle, why do you delay to send for a scribe to write the gift of your picture gallery in my name?" But Zobeida began to scold Masrur and said indignantly to the khalifat: "How can you put faith in the words of this liar and son of a liar? Have I not seen, have not my slaves seen, poor Sugarcane weeping for the death of her husband?" Then she threw her slipper at Masrur's head, and cried: "Begone, you son of a dog!" The eunuch, fearing to irritate her further, fled from the presence, bent double and shaking his head.

In anger Zobeida said to the khalifat: "O Commander of the Faithful, I never thought that you would league with a eunuch to give me pain and make

me believe that which is not; yet there can be no doubt that you concerted this report of Masrur's beforehand. Now, to prove to you that I am right, I will also send someone to see who has lost the bet. If you are right, I will admit that I am mad and that all my women are as mad as I. If, on the other hand, I am proved to be right I demand, over and above our gage, the head of that impertinent black eunuch." The khalifat, who knew by experience the lengths to which his queen's temper might carry her, gave immediate consent; so Zobeida called her old confidential nurse to her, and said: "O nurse, go without delay to the house of Abu Al-Hassan, the friend of our master the khalifat, and see whether it be himself or his wife who is dead. Then return speedily and report what you have seen." In spite of her tottering legs, the old nurse set out immediately and hastened towards Abu's dwelling.

Abu Al-Hassan, who was carefully watching the approaches to his house, saw the old woman far off and understood the motive of her coming. "O Sugarcane," cried he with a laugh, "O Sugarcane, I am dead!"

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Six-hundred-and-fifty-second Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

AS THERE WAS no time to lose, he hurried into his shroud and lay down on the ground with his feet pointing towards Mecca. Sugarcane placed his turban

over his face and began, with disordered hair, to beat her breasts and utter cries of grief. The old nurse entered and saw these things; sadly she went up to Sugarcane and said: "May Allah grant you the years which your man has lost! Alas, alas, O Sugarcane my daughter! Behold you are a widow and a young girl also! What will become of you without Abu Al-Hassan, O Sugarcane?" She wept for a space, and then continued: "Alas, my daughter, I must leave you. It pains me to do so, but I have to hasten to my mistress, Zobeida, and relieve her anxiety. For that shameless liar, Masrur, affirmed that you were dead." "Would to Allah that the eunuch had said truth, my mother!" answered Sugarcane with a deep groan, "I should not be weeping here! Yet it will not be long; for tomorrow morning at latest I also shall be dead from grieving." She redoubled her tears and lamentations so that the old nurse embraced her again and was soft and silent in her departure, fearing to disturb the mourner. She hastened to her mistress with news of what she had seen and heard, and, when she had finished speaking, sat down suddenly because she was breathless owing to her great age.

Zobeida turned haughtily to the khalifat and said: "In the first place we will hang that impertinent eunuch." In the height of perplexity, Haroun Al-Rachid sent for Masrur and would have angrily reproached him for his lies, had Zobeida given him time. But the queen, more than ever angered by his presence, cried out to the old nurse: "Tell this son of a dog what you have just told us!" Though she had not yet recovered her breath, the poor old woman was obliged to repeat her news, and this so angered Masrur that he cried, unmindful of the presence of the khalifat and Zobeida: "Toothless old fool, how dare you lie and smirch the

whiteness of your hair? Do you think you will make me believe that I did not see poor Sugarcane, dead and wrapped in her winding sheet?" The nurse poked forth her head in suffocated fury, as she answered: "There is no liar here but you, O black blackman! Yet it is unwise to say that you should be hanged, when you ought to be cut gradually in pieces and made to eat yourself." "Be silent, you senile chatterbox!" replied Masrur, "Go and tell your story to the girls!" But Zobeida, outraged by his insolence, burst into a storm of sobs, threw cushions, vases, ewers, and stools at his head, spat in his face, and finally cast herself upon the bed, dissolved in bitter tears.

The khalifat beat his hands together in great perplexity, and cried: "As Allah lives, Masrur is not the only liar: I am a liar, your nurse is a liar, and you also are a liar!" After an hour's reflection he lifted up his head again, and said: "We must know the truth; we must go ourselves to the house of Abu Al-Hassan." He begged Zobeida to accompany him, and set out, followed by Masrur, the nurse, and a crowd of women, in the direction of Abu's dwelling.

Although Abu Al-Hassan had warned her that such a thing was likely to happen, Sugarcane was afraid when she saw the advance of this host, and said to her husband: "As Allah lives, not every time you drop a cup will it be worth the taking up!" But her husband laughed and answered: "Let us both die, O Sugarcane!" He stretched his wife on the floor, wrapped her in the shroud, wound himself in an odd sheet of silk, and lay down beside her, being careful to place his turban over his face according to the rite. Hardly had his preparations been made when the company entered the chamber.

When the khalifat and Zobeida saw the sad spec-

tacle, they stayed motionless and dumb, until suddenly the queen, who had been much upset by so many emotions in so short a time, turned pale and fell fainting into the arms of her women. As soon as she came to herself, she shed rivers of tears, crying: "Alas, alas, for Sugarcane! You could not live after your husband was dead! You have died of grieving!" But the khalifat, who was weeping for the death of his friend, exclaimed petulantly: "It was not Sugarcane who died of grief; it was this poor Abu Al-Hassan who was not able to live after his wife was dead. That is self-evident. You think you are right because you can weep and faint." "You think you are right because you have a lying slave," answered Zobeida.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Six-hundred-and-fifty-third Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

"BUT WHERE ARE Abu Al-Hassan's servants?" added the queen, "Let them be fetched; for they can tell us which died first and which of grieving, seeing they must have shrouded them." "You are right," answered the khalifat, "and, for my part, I promise ten thousand dinars to the one who tells me."

Hardly had he spoken when a voice was heard from below the extemporised shroud, saying: "Give me the ten thousand dinars. I assure our master the khalifat that it was I, Abu Al-Hassan, who died second and from grief."

At this speech from the dead, Zobeida and her

women fled towards the door with cries of fear; but the khalifat, who understood in a flash the trick that had been played upon him, fell over on his backside in the middle of the room, crying: "No, no, Abu Al-Hassan; it is I who die of laughter!"

When the khalifat had finished his guffaw and Zobeida recovered from her terror, Abu Al Hassan and Sugarcane came out of their shrouds and nerved themselves to tell the whole truth. Abu threw himself at the khalifat's feet and Sugarcane embraced the feet of her mistress. Both humbly asked pardon, and Abu added: "When I was a bachelor I despised money, O Commander of the Faithful; but this Sugarcane, whom you so generously gave me, has such an appetite for it that she eats it, sacks and all. She could devour the treasure of our master and the treasurer as well." Zobeida and the khalifat laughed anew and pardoned the two offenders. Also they counted out the ten thousand dinars which Abu Al-Hassan had earned by his announcement and a further ten thousand to celebrate that rising from the dead.

This little jest taught the khalifat something of his friend's needs; so that later he ordered his treasurer to pay him a monthly wage equal to that of his grand-wazir, Giafar. More than ever he kept Abu Al-Hassan by him as a cup-companion and intimate friend. All concerned in this tale lived delightfully until the coming of the Separator, the Destroyer of palaces, the Builder of tombs, the Inexorable, the Inevitable.

When she had made an end of this tale, Shahrazade said to King Shahryar: "That is all I know about the Sleeper Wakened; but, if you will allow me, I have a tale which infinitely surpasses this one." "Before I give you leave," answered King Shahryar, "tell



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"The Bore of Zayn Al-Mawaris"

me the title of your story." "It is the tale of the Loves of Zayn Al-Mawasif," said Shahrazade; and when Shahryar asked: "What is the tale?" she smiled and said:

THE LOVES OF ZAYN AL-MAWASIF

IT IS RELATED, O auspicious King, that there was once, in years and ages long ago, a handsome youth whose name was Anis. He was by far the richest, most generous, most delicate, and most delightful young man of his time; and, as he loved all things in the world worthy of love: women, friends, good cheer, poetry, music, perfumes, grass, sparkling water, and walking, he lived ever in the height of happiness.

One afternoon, as he was agreeably sleeping, according to his custom, beneath a locust-tree in his garden, he dreamt that he was playing with four fair birds and a shining white dove. He was taking great joy in smoothing their feathers and embracing them, when a dismal black crow, with menacing beak, pounced on the dove and carried her away, scattering her four gentle companions in confusion. Anis woke much affected by this dream and went out in search of someone who might explain it to him; but for long he walked without finding such. He was thinking of returning to his house, when he came to a handsome building near which a woman's voice was singing this song, in accents of most charming melancholy:

*I hear the hearts of lovers sing
Free in the scents of dawn
Like birds,
But my heart does not sing*

*Because of a young thing
Lighter than fawn
Or branch of birds
Or scent of dawn.*

Anis felt his soul pierced by the tones of this singing; urged by a desire to know the singer, he went up to the half-open door and looked inside. He saw a magnificent garden filled as far as the eye could reach with harmonious terraces, flowered arbours and thickets of roses; jasmin, violet, and narcissus smiled under the clear sky of Allah and were sung among by a multitude of birds.

Unable to resist this fair sight, Anis went through the door and began to walk down the garden, until he saw a white band of playing girls upon a lawn, separated from him by an alley spanned by three arches.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Six-hundred-and-fifty-fifth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

COMING TO THE first arch, he saw these words painted upon it in letters of vermillion:

*Our house shall have a narrow door
That grief and time may not come in,
But friends and laughter, who were thin,
Shall enter, fatten, leave no more.*

On the second arch these words were graved in gold characters:

*May this house rise in air
As long as birds chant in its garden blooms,*

*And friendship scent its rooms
As long as flowers die of being fair.*

*As long as new stars come in spring to browse
The meadows of the sky,
As long as fruits on trees are born and die,
Live all who use this house.*

When he came to the third arch, he found that it bore these lines in azure lettering:

*Time and the sun shall move
Above each gentle chamber
And luxurious place
Of this our house;
But if the shadow of love
Clamber
And nibble like a mouse,
Then time and sun shall leave no trace.*

Beyond the third arch he came to the end of the alley and, at the foot of washed marble stairs which led up to the house, he saw a girl of between fourteen and fifteen leaning among cushions on a velvet carpet, with four damsels to surround and tend her. She was as white as the moon and had slim brows whose curve seemed to have been painted in black musk, her great dark eyes were full of massacre, her coral mouth was as small as a clove, and her chin said perfectly: "Behold me!" She could have fired hearts of the coldest stone.

Anis bowed to the earth before her, carried his hand to his heart, his lips, and his forehead, and then murmured: "Greeting, O queen of purity!" But the girl exclaimed: "How dared you come into this forbidden

place, O most impertinent young man!" "Dear mistress, the fault was not mine," he replied, "The blame is with you and with the garden. Through the half-opened door I saw terraces of jasmin, myrtle, and violet, and the garden bowing down with all its flowers before a moon of beauty. My soul could not resist the temptation to join its homage to that of the flowers and the birds." The girl laughed and asked: "What is your name?" "Anis, your slave," he answered; and she exclaimed: "You please me very much, Anis. Come and sit beside me."

He sat down and she said: "I wish for some distraction, Anis. Can you play chess?" When he answered that he could, she signed to one of her girls, who brought a board of ivory and ebony with gold corners and a set of red and white pieces, the red being carved from rubies and the white from rock crystal. "Would you like red or white?" she asked; and he replied: "As Allah lives, I will take white; for red is the colour of many things and belongs of right to you." "That may well be," she said, as she arranged the men.

The game began; but Anis paid more attention to his opponent's charms than to the pieces, being ravished by the beauty of hands which seemed paste of almonds and slight fingers as of white camphor. "How can I play against such fingers?" he cried; but she answered: "Check to your king, check to your king, Anis! You will lose!" Then, seeing that he paid little attention to the game, she added: "Let us have a bet of a hundred dinars; that will make you play more seriously." "Willingly," he answered, as he rearranged the men. Zayn Al-Mawasif, for such was the child's name, chose that moment to lift the silk veil which covered her hair, so that she shone

forth like a column of light. Anis did not know what he was doing; sometimes he played with the red pieces, sometimes with the white; he moved wrong continuously and, in the end, lost five games with a hundred dinars upon each. "You are not playing any more carefully," said Zayn Al-Mawasif, "Let us bet a thousand dinars." But, in spite of this heavier stake, Anis did not behave any better and lost again. Then said the girl: "Let us play for all your money against all mine." Anis accepted and lost. Finally he played away his shops, houses, gardens, and slaves, until nothing remained to him at all.

Zayn Al-Mawasif turned to him, saying: "Anis, you are a fool! I do not want you to regret having come into my garden and made my acquaintance, therefore I give you back all you have lost. Rise up now, and return upon your way in peace." But Anis answered: "As Allah lives, my queen, I do not regret having lost. If you asked my life you might have it. But do not for pity's sake make me leave you." Then said the girl: "Since you will not take back what you have lost, find the kadi and witnesses, and bring them here so that you make over your possessions to me in due form." Anis did as he was bidden; and the kadi, though the pen nearly fell from his old fingers when he saw the beauty of Zayn Al-Mawasif, made out the deed of gift and had two witnesses set their seal to it. Then he departed.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Six-hundred-and-fifty-sixth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

ZAYN AL-MAWASIF turned to Anis with a laugh, saying: "Now you may go; for we do not know you." "O queen," said he, "will you let me go without the satisfaction of desire?" And she answered: "I am very willing for that satisfaction, Anis; but I must ask you for something else first. You must bring me four bladders of pure musk, four ounces of grey amber, four thousand pieces of gold brocade, and four harnessed mules." "You shall have them," said he. "But how?" she asked, "You have nothing left with which to buy them." "Allah will provide," said he, "I have friends who will lend me the money." "Then go and get those things," said she; and Anis went out to find the friends in whom he trusted.

As soon as he was gone, Zayn Al-Mawasif said to Hubub, one of her maids: "Follow him and see what he does. When all his friends have refused to help him and have dismissed him on one pretext or another, go up to him and say: 'Good master Anis, my mistress wishes to see you instantly.' Bring him with you and show him into the reception hall. After that, what is fated to happen will happen." Hubub bowed low before her mistress and hastened out after Anis.

Zayn Al-Mawasif went indoors and bathed in the hammam. Her girls tended her as for an extraordinary occasion; they depilated what there was to depilate, they rubbed what there was to rub, they perfumed what there was to perfume, they made long what there was to make long, and they made short

what there was to make short. Then they put a robe worked in fine gold upon her and set a silver fillet about her head to hold a circle of rich pearls, a circle which fastened at the back and dropped two knots of rubies upon the virgin silver of her shoulders. They tressed her heavy black hair, perfumed with musk and amber, into twenty-four braids which fell to her heels; and when she stood before them like a new made bride they fell at her feet, trembling with admiration and crying: "Allah preserve our mistress in her splendour! Allah guard our mistress from the glance of envy and from the evil eye!" While she practiced steps of pretty walking up and down the chamber, they made a thousand and then a thousand compliments to her in the sincerity of their souls.

In the meanwhile young Hubub, who had given her message to Anis as soon as she had seen him spurned by all his friends, led him into the hall where Zayn Al-Mawasif waited.

When Anis saw her in all the brilliance of her fresh beauty, he stopped as if thunderstruck, and exclaimed: "Is it she or a bride from Paradise?" Satisfied with the effect she had produced, Zayn Al-Mawasif went up to him with a smile and led him by the hand to a large low diwan, upon which she seated herself. After pulling him down beside her, she signed to her women, who brought in a low wide table carved from a single mass of silver, on which these gastronomic verses were engraved:

*Cast down your eyes, lift up your souls,
Dig spoons into the great sauce bowls.
Eat roast and fried and boiled and grilled,
Eat jams and jellies, warmed and chilled.
Eat quails cooked golden to the minute,*

*Eat nut-fed lamb with raisins in it.
Who would the warm stout capon blame,
Date-coloured with judicious flame,
Because he could not sing or fly?
(He eats the better.) Nor can I . . .
The golds of man are manifold
But Allah made this kabab's gold;
He made this purslane salad sup
The soul of olives from a cup;
He set these twin and ponderous fish
To lie on mint leaves in a dish . . .
I will be silent now and eat
A meal which poets shall repeat
In songs of cooking, sound and sage,
Down all the hungry roads of age.*

The women brought perfumed meats; the two young people ate, and drank wines out of the same cup, sweetening their mouths with pastries. Then Zayn Al-Mawasif leaned over Anis, saying: "Since we have eaten bread and salt together and you have become my guest, I cannot keep the littlest thing of yours. Whether you like it or not, I give you back all that I have won from you." Anis threw himself in gratitude at the girl's feet; but she raised him, saying: "If you really wish to thank me come with me into my bed. I want to know if you are really a master of chess, when you set your mind to it."

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Six-hundred-and-fifty-eighth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

"I WILL SHOW you that the white king can beat all the knights," answered Anis, as he took that fair moon in his arms and carried her to the bedchamber, whose door the girl Hubub had silently opened for them. He played a game of chess with the girl, following all the rules with taste and skill; he played a second and a third and even a fifteenth game, moving the king so valiantly, never on the defensive, that the girl owned herself beaten, crying in breathless surprise: "You have won, O father of lances! Tell your king to rest a little." She rose with a smile and hid away the chessmen.

Swimming soul and body in a pleasant sea, they rested for a little in each other's arms; and then Zayn Al-Mawasif said: "Though you have valiantly earned this rest, O invincible Anis, I must confess that I would like to know if you can make verses as well as you can play chess. Do you think that you could invent a rhythmic disposition of our meeting and our game, so that we may never forget either?" "That is easy," answered Anis; and, sitting upon the scented couch with the girl's little arms about his neck, he improvised this sublime apostrophe:

*The tale of a girl of fourteen
Met in Paradise:
Allah has blown a million white moons
Into blue infinity,
But none of them were you.*

*Light you stood in the garden,
The slim trees bowed to you,
The birds would change their note.*

*"Your name, O Silk?"
"What would my name be
Save Zayn Al-Mawasif,
Gilding perfection?"*

*"Here is musk
And pearls lying in gold
For a girl of fourteen
Met in Paradise."*

"And here am I."

*O belt released,
O cornflower bright chemise,
Body of white and diamonds,
Scent of kisses,
O thousand scents
In the corners of my love.*

I will tell my drunkenness:

*You would say her hair
Had brought eternal night,
But for the fire of roses.*

*I had gone by the swords,
But her mouth was young wine
And there bubbled a fountain between her lips.*

*Allah set down His two rose cups
On the marble table of her breast*

*And in the dimples of her belly
Sprinkled the scents of every valley.*

*The sweet fort of folly
Lies between two laughing columns,
Bearded and yet a rose . . .*

*This was the girl of fourteen
I met in Paradise.*

Hearing these lines made in her honour Zayn Al-Mawasif laughed and exulted.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Six-hundred-and-fifty-ninth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

SHE KISSED ANIS, saying: "O Anis, you have delighted me! As Allah lives, I can no longer exist without you!" They passed the rest of the night together, in assaults of kissing and coupling until the morning. And the next day they stayed by each other, resting, eating, and drinking in joy; and such was their life for a whole month, a month of transport. At the end of that time, young Zayn Al-Mawasif, who was married, received a letter from her husband announcing his immediate return. "May he snap his old bones!" she cried when she read it, "May such ugliness never return to me! His ill-omened face will break in upon our fair life! What must we do, O Anis?" "I am in your hands. O Zayn," he answered,

"Fine trickery is rather the woman's part than the man's." "But my husband is a very jealous and violent man," she retorted, "It will not be easy to allay his suspicions." She reflected for an hour, and then said: "I see no other way, save to introduce you into the house as a perfume seller and spice merchant. Therefore study that trade and, above all, be very careful when you are dealing with my husband not to put him out in any way." Thus they planned together how they should deceive the husband.

When the good man returned from his journey, he saw to his grieved surprise that his wife was quite yellow from head to foot. Not knowing that the child had rubbed herself with saffron, he asked if she were ill, and she replied: "If I am yellow it is not because I am ill, but because I have been sad and fearful during your absence. For pity's sake do not go away again without taking a companion to defend and care for you; that will ease my mind." "I will do so gladly," he answered, "By the life of my head, your idea is a good one! Calm yourself now and try to bring back that fine complexion of yours." With that he kissed her and went down to his shop, for he was a great merchant and a Jew. The girl was a Jewess.

Anis, who had carefully studied his new trade, was waiting for the husband at the door of his shop; in order to become quickly acquainted with him he offered him perfumes and spices at greatly below the market price. The husband, who had the hardened soul of all Jews, was so satisfied with his bargain and with the young man's delightful manners that he became a regular customer. Indeed, after a few days, he offered him a partnership in his own business, if he should bring sufficient capital. Anis at once accepted this offer, hoping that it might carry him nearer his

beloved, and the two drew up a deed of partnership without delay, sealing it in the presence of two worthy merchants.

The girl's husband invited his partner to eat at his house that night, in order to celebrate their association; he conducted him to his home and, since he was a Jew and Jews are shameless and do not keep their women hidden, made preparation to introduce his wife to Anis. "He is a rich and well-bred youth," he said to her, "I wish you to come and see him." But Zayn Al-Mawasif, who wished to hide her joy, pretended to be indignant. "Father of Beards," she cried, "how dare you introduce strangers to the inmost places of your house? How can you have the effrontery to show me to him? The name of Allah be upon me and about me! Must I forget a woman's modesty because you have found a partner? I would rather cut myself in pieces!" "These are ill-considered words," grumbled the Jew, "Since when have we been Mussulmans, to hide our women? This delicacy is out of place and out of season. We are children of Moses; what have we to do with delicacy?" He spoke thus aloud, but in his soul he said: "Surely the blessing of Allah is upon my house, seeing my wife to be so chaste and moderate and wise!" Then he persuaded her to come and entertain his partner.

Anis and Zayn Al-Mawasif were very careful not to show that they knew each other; during the meal the young man kept his eyes modestly lowered, glancing only at the husband and feigning an absolute discretion. "An excellent young man!" thought the Jew; and he asked Anis to come again on the next day. Anis came again and yet again; and each time he behaved himself with tact in everything.

Yet the Jew had already been struck by a strange

coincidence. He had a tame bird in the house which he had trained himself; and this bird loved him very dearly.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Six-hundred-and-sixtieth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

BUT, DURING THE JEW'S absence, this bird had transferred his affection to Anis and become accustomed to perch on his head and shoulders with a thousand pretty caresses; so, when his master returned, he considered him as a stranger and did not wish to recognise him. He kept all his cries of joy and kisses of his beak for young Anis. "By Moses and Aaron, the bird his forgotten me!" cried the Jew, "Such ingratitude makes the illness and sensibility of my wife all the more commendable." Thus he persuaded himself; but there was another matter which forced itself upon his notice and tortured him with dismal thoughts.

Though his wife was extremely reserved and modest in the presence of his partner, he noticed that she had very extraordinary dreams when she was asleep. She would stretch out her arms, panting for breath; she would sigh and twist herself about, as she called on the name of Anis and spoke to him as only a passionate lover speaks. The Jew was astonished to behold these things night after night. "By the Pentateuch," he cried in his own ear, "this shows that all women are alike. Even when they are virtuous and continent, like my wife, they must satisfy their evil desires in

some way! Far be the Evil One! It is a curse on the world that these creatures should be kneaded from the flames of hell. . . . I must put this matter to the proof. If my wife withstands the temptation, then her dreams and the conduct of the bird are accidental and of no account."

Therefore, when it was time for the evening meal, the Jew told his wife and partner that he had been invited to the house of the wali on important business, and begged them to wait his return before eating. Then he left them and went out into the garden; but, instead of proceeding to the wali's house, he returned on his tracks and climbed up secretly to the higher storey, where he could watch the hall from the window of a little room.

He had not long to wait for proofs, kisses and caresses of unbelievable fire; and, as he did not wish to betray his presence, he was forced to witness the lovers' dalliance for a whole hour. After this trying ordeal, he went down into the hall, smiling as if he knew nothing; and, during the meal, paid more kindly regard than ever to young Anis, who, for his part, took pains to appear more bashful even than before.

But when the feast was finished and the young man gone, the Jew exclaimed: "By the horns of Moses, I will burn their hearts with separation!" Then, taking a letter from his bosom, he said aloud: "I shall have to go on another long journey. This letter comes from my agents in a far country, who require my presence for an important deal." Zayn Al-Mawasif hid her great joy, and said: "Would you leave me die in loneliness, dear husband? Tell me at least how long you will be away." "Not less than three years and not more than four," he answered; and she cried in desolation: "O poor Zayn Al-Mawasif! O despair!

Can I never keep my husband with me?" Then said the Jew: "Do not let that distress you; for I have determined to take you with me this time and not expose you to the torment of my absence. Rise up now and call Hubub, Khutub, Sukub, and Rakub to make your luggage."

Poor Zayn Al-Mawasif became yellow indeed; her eyes filled with tears and she could not speak. Exulting within himself, her husband said to her most kindly: "What is the matter, Zayn?" "Nothing, my dear," she answered, "I am only a little upset by the joyful news."

Under her husband's eye, she directed the preparation of her women, cudgelling her brains the while for a means of breaking the sad tidings to Anis. At length she found a moment to trace these lines on the entrance door:

*You are afar from me
And yet I see the red wound of your heart.
Jealousy parted us and smiled to see
Me smile above my smart . . .
I swear by Allah it shall not be he,
Though we must lie apart.*

Then she mounted the camel which had been prepared for her and hid herself in the litter, making verses of farewell to the house and garden. The caravan started, with the Jew at its head, Zayn Al-Mawasif in the middle, and her women bringing up the rear. So much for them.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Six-hundred-and-sixty-second Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

NEXT MORNING YOUNG Anis was surprised not to see his partner come to the market. He waited for him until the evening and then decided to go to the house for news. When he came to the door, he saw the lines his mistress had written there, and was crushed to earth by the blackness of his grief. As soon as he could do so, he asked tidings of his beloved from the neighbours and learnt that the Jew had taken her away, with her women and much baggage, upon ten camels, provisioned for a very long journey.

Anis began to wander through the solitude of the garden like a man distracted. He improvised these lines:

*This line of trees
Is the end of her garden,
Therefore pause and weep;
Therefore call on the South wind
That it may blow above this house.*

My soul would stay the camel goats.

*Come, O cool night,
Come hither breeze from the desert,
I know the scent of you now.*

*But has she bidden you carry back nothing,
Nothing for my tears?*

*They roused the camels in the night
Before the little wind of dawn;
The camels kneeled,
They rose, they did not feel you.*

*Yet I have watered the sand
Before their feet.*

While he was thus reflecting he heard a crow croaking from its nest in a palm tree, and he said again:

*What do you in her garden, crow?
I can make all the harsh cries for this woe,
I would have you know.*

After this, Anis lay down upon the ground and was overcome by the sleep of sorrow. But his beloved appeared to him in a dream and he was happy with her; they lay in each other's arms. Suddenly he woke and the illusion departed, so that he could only console himself with these lines:

*As bright,
As soon departed
As a yellow spark of light
In the lonely black of night,
She came in dreams.
To sleep, to know, to kiss, to love the thing
which seems
Is to wake broken-hearted.*

Thus Anis lamented, living in the shadow of the desolate house, never departing to take food at his own place. So much for him.

When the caravan was a month out from that city, the Jew halted it and had his tents pitched near a town upon the seaside. He stripped his wife of her rich garments and took a long flexible whip to her, saying: "Vile wanton, this will assoil your filthy flesh. Oh that that young bugger, Anis, were between my

hands!" Then, in spite of her cries and protestations, he lashed her with the full strength of his arm, put an old mantle of pricking hair upon her, and went into the town to find a smith.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Six-hundred-and-sixty-third Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

WHEN HE HAD fetched the smith, he said to him: "I wish you to shoe this slave's feet and then her hands; she will make a good mount." The smith looked at the old man in astonishment, and said: "As Allah lives, this is the first time I have ever been called upon to shoe a human! What has she done to deserve such a punishment?" Then said the Jew: "By the Pentateuch, this is a usual punishment among us Jews when our slaves misbehave themselves!" But the smith, who was quite captivated by Zayn Al-Mawasif's beauty, looked at the Jew in disgust and spat in his face; then, instead of touching the girl, he improvised these lines:

*O filthy mule, I'd hammer in
A thousand nails beneath your skin
Rather than torture these fair feet
For which gold anklets were more meet;
If a poor smith can judge of things,
You should have nails, and she have wings.*

Then the smith ran to the wali of the town and told

him what he had seen, dwelling on the marvellous beauty of Zayn Al-Mawasif and the horrible cruelty of the Jew. The wali ordered his guards to go to the camp at once and bring the fair slave, the Jew, and the other women into his presence.

At the end of an hour the guards introduced the old Jew, Zayn Al-Mawasif, Hubub, Khutub, Sukub, and Rukub, into the audience hall; where the wali, dazzled by Zayn's beauty, said to her: "What is your name, my child?" "Your slave's name is Zayn Al-Mawasif, O master," she answered moving her hips. "And who is this very ugly man?" demanded the wali. "It is a Jew," she answered again, "He took me away from my father and mother, violated me, and has tried, by continuous ill-treatment, to make me abjure Islam, the sacred Faith of my fathers. He tortures me every day to break down my resistance; see, here are evidences of his continual beating." She modestly uncovered her upper arms and showed her stripes to the wali, adding: "Dear master, the honourable smith will testify to the barbaric treatment which this Jew intended for me. My women will confirm his words. As for me, I am a Mussulman, a Believer, and I bear witness that there is no God but Allah, and that Muhammad is the Prophet of Allah!"

The wali turned to Hubub, Sukub, Khutub, and Rukub, saying: "Is this true?" and they answered: "It is true." Then the wali flashed his eyes upon the Jew, and cried: "Woe, woe upon you, enemy of Allah! Why did you take this child from her father and mother, her house and land? Why did you torture her? Why did you try to make her renounce our holy Faith? Why did you try to lead her into the horrible errors of your vile belief?" "Dear master, I swear by the lives of Jacob, Moses, and Aaron that this girl

is my wedded wife," replied the Jew; but the wali cried: "Beat him with sticks!" The guards threw the old man to earth and gave him a hundred blows on the soles of his feet, a hundred upon his back, and a hundred over his buttocks. As he still continued to affirm that Zayn Al-Mawasif was his wife, the wali cried again: "Cut off his hands and feet, since he will not confess!"

Hearing this terrible sentence, the Jew exclaimed: "By the holy horns of Moses, since I can save myself in no other way, I confess that this woman is not my wife and that I stole her from her father's house." "He confesses," cried the wali, "Let him be thrown into prison and stay there all his life! Thus shall all misbelieving Jews be punished!" The guards dragged the Jew to prison, and doubtless he died there, alone with his ugliness and unbelief. May Allah have no mercy upon him! May He cast that recreant soul into the lowest fires of hell! We are Believers! We testify that there is no God but Allah, and that Muhammad is the Prophet of Allah!

Zayn Al-Mawasif kissed the wali's hand and, returning to camp with her four women, ordered the camel boys to strike the tents and start the caravan for the land of her beloved.

They travelled without incident and, on the evening of the third day, came to a Christian monastery, holding forty monks and a patriarch. This patriarch, whose name was Danis, sat taking the air outside the door and saw the beautiful girl pass upon her camel; he felt his old dead flesh become alive; his feet shivered, his back shivered, his heart shivered, and his head shivered. He rose from his seat and, bowing to the earth before Zayn Al-Mawasif's litter, invited her to dismount and rest her company. He strongly urged

her to stop that night at the monastery, alleging, as an excuse, that the roads were infested at night by brigands. Not wishing to refuse any offer of hospitality, even though it came from a Christian and a monk, Zayn Al-Mawasif came down from her camel and entered the monastery with her companions.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Six-hundred-and-sixty-fifth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THE PATRIARCH DANIS had been put on fire by love for the delights of Zayn Al-Mawasif, therefore he set himself to resolve the hard question of how he should declare his passion. At length it occurred to him to send the most eloquent of the forty monks to plead his cause; but, when the monk found himself in the presence of this moon of beauty, he felt his tongue tie itself into a thousand knots, while his belly finger spoke eloquently beneath his robe and surged up like the trunk of an elephant. Zayn Al-Mawasif laughed with all her heart at this, and so did Hubub, Khutub, Sukub, and Rukub; but when the monk continued to stand there speechless, with his affair so high, the girl signed to her followers, who rose and pushed him out of the room.

When Danis saw his monk return with a woe-begone expression, he said to himself: "Doubtless he was not eloquent enough." So he sent a second monk. But, when the second monk stood before Zayn Al-Mawasif, the same things happened to him as to the first. He

was dismissed and returned, with hanging head, to the patriarch, who sent a third monk, a fourth, a fifth, and finally all the forty, one after another. Each time, however, the ambassador returned with no good news, having been unable to speak his message except by signs from his inheritance. Then Danis remembered the proverb: "A man should scratch with his own nails and walk on his own feet," and determined to see to the matter himself.

With grave and measured steps he entered Zayn Al-Mawasif's apartment; but her delightful presence reduced him also to a swollen silence. Amid a storm of mocking laughter, he left the room, with his nose hanging to his feet.

When he had gone, Zayn Al-Mawasif rose and said to her women: "We must slip away from this monastery as quickly as possible, lest these horrible monks and their stinking elder should violently soil us in the night." Favoured by the darkness, the five glided out from the building and urged their camels upon the road to their own country. So much for them.

When the patriarch and his forty monks rose in the morning and found that Zayn Al-Mawasif had disappeared, their tripes twisted in great despair. They met together in the church where it was their custom to bray like asses together; but, instead of singing their usual anthems and saying their ordinary prayers, they improvised in this way:

The first monk sang:

*O Lord, who made the passion of her fire
And tipped her arrows with a sharp desire,
Give her sweet body back to us, O Lord,
O Lord, who tipped her arrows with desire.*

The second monk answered:

*O Lord, who gave her eyes to take me whole
And with her beauty wearied out my soul,
Give me to tire her body out, O Lord,
O Lord, who let her weary out my soul.*

Then the third monk sang:

*O Lord, who made her lips as honey sweet
Yet sharper than the sickle in the wheat,
Grant me to be the honey to her steel,
O Lord, who made her to mow down the wheat;
O Lord, make me the carpet of her heel,
Who made the dream above her visiting feet.*

The fourth monk replied:

*O Lord, who let the silver of her star
Come down upon the dark in which we are,
Grant us a quiet tongue concerning this,
O Lord, who silvered over her cymar.*

The fifth monk sobbed and sang:

*O Lord, who cast the fullness of her hips
And made her spittle more than raisin drips,
Favour the onyx tears I weep for her,
O Lord, who made her as the raisin drips.*

The sixth monk continued:

*O Lord, who made her roses on a stem
With golden starlight shining on to them,
Grant that those roses pierce me to the heart,
O Lord, who made the starlight smile on them.*

Then the seventh monk intoned:

*O Lord, who let her madden in our ways
And lost her there, my kneeling spirit prays*

*That she come back to madden us again,
O Lord, to dance and madden in our ways.*

The rest of the monks sang also in the same vein and then the patriarch controlled the sobbing tremors of his voice and also sang:

*O Lord, my soul is full of heaviness,
Because she paused and stabbed our happiness,
Grant that she heal the wounds she made in joy,
O Lord, who stabbed the heart of happiness.*

*O Lord, who sent her as a silver mole
To fret my heart and tear into my soul
May she return to ravage them again,
O Lord, who made the body and the soul.*

When they had finished these songs, they threw themselves face down upon the flagstones of their church and wept. They determined to make an image of the fugitive and set it upon the altar of their unbelief; but death surprised them before they could accomplish this, making a term to their torment and sending them down into the graves which they had digged for themselves inside the monastery.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Six-hundred-and-sixty-sixth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

THE VIGILANCE OF Allah had decreed a safe passage for the caravan; and when Zayn Al-Mawasif had en-

tered her dwelling in her native land, had put all in order, and had perfumed her bed with precious amber, she sent Hubub to tell Anis of her return.

Anis, who had passed all his days and nights in weeping, was stretched out in sad sleep upon his couch, dreaming that his loved one had returned. As he had faith in the truth of dreams, he rose and went towards her house; he passed through the garden door and at once felt all the air scented with the musk of her near presence. As if his feet were winged, he flew to the chamber where Zayn Al-Mawasif waited for him, and the two fell into each other's arms. For a long time they stayed thus, showering upon each other passionate tokens of their love, and then, that they might not swoon for happiness, they drank from a cup of refreshing drink, made with lemon, sugar, and water of flowers. After this, they regaled each other with the stories of their absence, breaking off every now and then to kiss. Allah alone knows the number and violence of their loves that night. Next morning they sent young Hubub for the kadi and witnesses, who wrote out their marriage contract. They lived together in perfect joy until the Reaper of lads and girls came to them. But glory be to Him who scatters beauty and pleasure according to His justice! And prayer and peace be upon Muhamad, Lord of Messengers, who has made a Paradise for His Believers!

When Shahrazade had made an end of this story, little Doniazade cried: "Dear sister, your words are full of savour and sweetness, of purity and excellence!" Then said Shahrazade: "All that is nothing to what I would tell the king, if he would let me, concerning the Lazy Youth." "I give you permission to

“speak,” said King Shahryar, “Your words have satisfied me, and also I do not know the Tale of the Lazy Youth.” So Shahrazade said:

THE TALE OF THE LAZY YOUTH

It is related, among many other matters, that one day, while Haroun Al-Rachid sat upon his throne, a young eunuch entered, holding in his hands a red gold crown, encrusted with pearls, rubies, and inestimable jewels. The child kissed the earth between the hands of the khalifat, saying: “O Commander of the Faithful, our mistress Zobeida sends me with greetings to tell you that this marvellous crown, which is well-known to you, still lacks a large gem for its top; and that no one has been able to find a jewel sufficiently beautiful to fill the empty place. She has had search made among the merchants and has gone through her own treasures, but the crown still lacks its chief ornament. She therefore begs you to institute an enquiry yourself, that her desire may be satisfied.”

The khalifat turned towards his wazirs, emirs, chamberlains, and lieutenants, saying: “I command you all to find a stone large enough and fair enough to satisfy my queen.”

They went carefully through the stores of jewels belonging to their wives and found nothing suitable; therefore they reported their unsucccess to the khalifat. Haroun Al-Rachid became sad and said to them: “How is it that I, who am king of the kings of earth, cannot obtain so much as a wretched stone, when I desire it? Woe unto you all! Go and enquire among the merchants.” They enquired among the merchants, and these answered with one voice: “Hunt no fur-

ther; for our lord the khalifat will only find that jewel in the hands of a certain young man of Bassora, whose name is Abu Muhamad Lazybones." So they informed the khalifat, saying: "Our lord the khalifat will only find that jewel in the hands of a certain young man of Bassora, whose name is Abu Muhamad Lazybones."

The khalifat ordered his wazir, Giafar, to command the emir of Bassora that Abu Muhamad Lazybones be sent to him in Baghdad without delay.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Six-hundred-and-sixty-seventh Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

GIAFAR THEREFORE WROTE a letter and bade Masrur, the sword-bearer, to carry it to the emir Al-Zubaydi, governor of Bassora.

As soon as the emir Al-Zubaydi received these orders from the khalifat, he gave all honourable welcome to the envoy and provided him with guards to conduct him to the palace of Abu Muhamad. When Masrur arrived at that place, and was received at the door by a troop of richly appavelled slaves, he said to them: "Tell your master that the Commander of the Faithful requires his presence in Baghdad."

The slaves retired and, in a few moments, young Abu Muhamad himself appeared upon the threshold and bowed even to the earth. "Obedience to the Prince of Believers!" he said, "I beg my honourable guests to enter my house for a moment." "We cannot delay

here," answered Masrur, "The Commander of the Faithful eagerly waits your coming." Then said Abu: "Yet it is necessary to give me time to prepare for the journey. Come in and rest." Masrur and his companions made a few difficulties for form's sake and then followed the young man.

From the vestibule inwards, they saw magnificent blue velvet curtains wrought with fine gold, precious marbles, and carved woods; they saw astonishing jeweller's work upon the walls and ceilings, and on every tapestry. Their host led them to a hammam, shining with cleanness and scented like the heart of a rose-tree, a bath more splendid than any in the khalifat's palace. After they had bathed, slaves clad them in sumptuous robes of green brocade, sewed with subjects in pearl and gold; and, after wishing them the wishes of the bath, handed them sherberts and sweet cakes. Then five lads entered, each as fair as the angel Harut, and presented the guests with purses of five thousand dinars, as a present of welcome. The first slaves then led Masrur and his following into the guest hall, where Abu Muhamad awaited them on a silk diwan, leaning his arms upon cushions heavy with pearls. He rose in their honour and made them sit beside him, pressing such admirable meat and drink upon them as has not been found upon the cloths of emperors.

At length the young man rose, saying: "I am the slave of the Commander of the Faithful! My preparations are complete and we may depart for Baghdad." He went forth with his guests and, while they were mounting their horses, the slaves helped him into the saddle of a white mule like virgin silver, whose harness shone with the fires of gold and winked with precious stones. Masrur and young Abu Muhamad

rode at the head of the escort and, coming, after a pleasant journey, into the City of Peace, entered the khalifat's palace.

When he was introduced into the presence, the youth most modestly kissed the earth three times before the throne, and when Haroun invited him to be seated, sat most respectfully. "O Commander of the Faithful," he said, "though your slave has not been told, he knows very well why you require his presence. Therefore, instead of bringing a single jewel, he has thought it his humble duty to carry a large assortment with him. If our master the khalifat will allow it, I shall open the coffers of my loyal present." "I see nothing against that," said the khalifat.

Abu Muhamad had two chests brought into the hall and drew from the first, among other marvels ravishing to the eye, three gold trees with gold branches, whose leaves were emerald and aquamarine, whose fruits were rubies for pomegranates, pearls for apples, and topaz in place of oranges.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Six-hundred-and-sixty-eighth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

WHILE THE KHALIFAT marvelled at the beauty of these trees, Abu Muhamad took from the second coffer a pavilion of silk and gold, incrusting with hyacinths and emeralds, rubies and sapphires. The central pole was of Indian aloe wood and all the outside folds of the pavilion were picked out in colored jewels; the

inside was ornamented in marvellous dexterity with the graceful leaping of beasts and the flight of birds; and these beasts and birds were of gold, of chrysolite and garnet, of emerald and fabulous metals.

When young Abu Muhamad had taken these various parts of the pavilion from the coffer, he set them down at haphazard upon the carpet and, standing motionless before them, lifted and lowered his eyebrows. At once the pavilion rose of itself in the middle of the hall, as prompt and orderly as if twenty expert slaves had had the raising of it. The three trees came and planted themselves at its entrance, protecting it with their brilliant shade.

Abu Muhamad looked a second time at the pavilion and gave a whistle that was almost a sigh; immediately the jewelled birds began to sing and the gold beasts answered them with sweet harmony. Then Abu whistled again and all was silence.

The khalifat and those that were with him did not know whether they slept or waked; but Abu Muhamad kissed the earth again between Haroun's hands, saying: "O Prince of Believers, do not think that I have brought these little gifts, which seem not displeasing to you, with any interested motive; they are simply part of the homage which we all owe to our master. They are nothing in comparison to those which I would bring later, if I were allowed."

When the khalifat had a little recovered from his astonishment, he said: "Young man, can you tell me how these things have come to you, a simple subject among my subjects? You are known as Abu Muhamad Lazybones, and I am aware that your father was but a common cupper at the hammam, who left you no inheritance. How then, in so short a time and while you are still so young, have you reached to this

eminence of riches and distinction?" "I will tell you my tale, O Commander of the Faithful," answered Abu, "for it is so strange and filled with such marvellous prodigies that, were it written with needles in the corner of an eye, yet would it serve as a rich lesson to the circumspect." Al-Rachid's imagination was fired by this preliminary and he begged the young man to speak. So Abu Muhamad Lazybones began:

KNOW THEN, O Commander of the Faithful (whom may Allah bless!) that I am, as you say, Abu Muhamad Lazybones, the son of a poor bath cupper, who died without leaving anything to my mother and myself. Those who told you this of me, spoke the truth; but they did not tell you how I earned my name. . . . From infancy I was the slackest and laziest boy on the earth. Indeed, so great was my laziness that, if I was lying on the ground and the sun beat with all his fires on my bare head at noon, I had not the energy to move into the shade and would rather let myself be roasted like a colocasia than move an arm or leg. Thus my skull became proof against any sort of blow; and, if you were now to command Masrur to split my head, you would see his blade fly to pieces in the attempt.

I was fifteen when my father died (Allah have him in mercy!); but I was little better than two years old, for I would neither work nor move, and my poor mother had to go out to service in order to feed me. I passed my days lying on my side, without the strength to drive away the flies which made their homes upon my face.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Six-hundred-and-sixty-ninth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

ONE DAY, BY a rare chance, when my mother had finished a month's work with those for whom she laboured, she came to me with five pieces of silver in her hand. "My child," she said, "I have just heard that our neighbour Muzaffar is setting out for China. Now, you know, my son, that this good old man does not disdain the poor or drive them away; therefore take these five dirhams and come with me to him. You must give him the money and beg him to buy you goods in China, which, under Allah, may give you a great profit in Bassora. Here is a chance for us to become rich; and he who refuses the bread of Allah is an Unbeliever." When I heard my mother speak in this way, I became lazier than ever and lay back upon myself as if I were dead. In vain my mother begged me, conjured me, in the name of Allah and by the tomb of my father; I pretended to snore. "By your poor father's excellence," she said at last, "I swear that, if you will not obey me and come with me to the sheikh I shall no longer give you food or drink but let you die of want." I understood from her tone that she would be as good as her word, therefore I let out a sulky grunt which signified: "Help me to sit up." She took me by the arm and helped me to sit up; then I began to cry for very weariness and sighed; "Give me my slippers." She brought them and I said: "Put them on for me." She put them on my feet, and I said: "Help me to get up." She lifted me and I exclaimed with a groan: "Hold me up while I walk." She came behind and supported me, pushing me gently

forward, and I began to walk very slowly, pausing at each step to get my breath and lolling my head upon my shoulders. At last I came like this to the sea shore and found old Muzaffar making ready to sail. He was surrounded by friends, who hailed my arrival with stupefaction, crying: "This is the first time we have ever seen Abu Muhamad Lazybones walking abroad. This is the first time he has come out of his house."

I went up to the sheikh, saying: "O uncle, are you not the sheikh, Muzaffar?" "At your service, O Abu Muhamad," he replied, "O son of my old friend, the dead cupper, whom may Allah ever harbour in his pity!" I held out the five silver pieces, and said: "O sheikh, I pray you take these five dirhams and buy goods for me in China. Perhaps thus, through your great kindness, we may make a profit." The sheikh Muzaffar took the money and knotted it under his belt in the name of Allah. Then he took leave of my mother and me, and went on board with other merchants, who were accompanying him to that far land.

Allah had willed that the sheikh Muzaffar should arrive safely at the port of his desire. He and his friends bought, sold, and trafficked according to their will; and then re-embarked on the same ship which they had chartered at Bassora.

When they had sailed ten days, Muzaffar rose suddenly from his place and beat his hands together in despair, crying: "About ship! We must return to China!" "But why, O Muzaffar?" asked his astonished friends; and he answered, "Because I have forgotten to spend the five dirhams of Abu Muhamad Lazybones." "But, by Allah, dear master," objected the other merchants, "surely you would not condemn us to infinite danger and loss of time for so small a matter?" "We must return to China," he said, "His

father was my friend and I gave my word." "Let not that trouble you," said they, "for rather than put the ship about, we will each give you five gold dinars as interest upon the five dirhams. You can present the boy with all that gold when you arrive." Muzaffar accepted this offer, and each of the merchants straightway handed him five dinars to be kept for me.

The ship went on her way and put in to provision at a certain isle, where Muzaffar and his friends disembarked to take the air and walk upon the shore. As the old man was returning to the ship, he saw an ape-seller with a string of twenty apes. Among these beasts there was one which looked very miserable, a small, bald, shivering, tear-stained object; and, whenever their master was not looking, the other apes would leap upon the wretched one, biting and scratching him, and pissing on his head. Muzaffar's kindly heart had pity on the unfortunate creature and he asked its price. "I will sell it for five dirhams, to get rid of it," answered the owner, and the sheikh exclaimed: "That is just the sum which Abu Muhammad gave me. I will buy the ape for him and he can earn his bread by showing it in the markets." He paid my five dirhams to the ape-seller and had the wretched monkey taken on board by one of the sailors. Then he re-embarked and waited to set sail.

As he and his companions were making their final preparations, they saw the fishers of that island diving to the bottom of the sea and bringing up shells filled with pearls. The monkey saw this also.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Six-hundred-and-seventieth Night
Had Come*

SHE SAID:

HE LEAPT OVER the ship's side into the water and came up, after a certain time, holding, in his hands and even in his mouth, shells filled with pearls of marvellous size and beauty. He climbed on board and laid his spoil at Muzaffar's feet; then he went on signing with his paw, as if to say: "Fasten something round my neck." The sheikh tied a bag round his neck and the ape dived again into the water. Soon he emerged with the sack full of shells containing finer and richer pearls than before. He plunged many times and on each occasion brought remarkable riches to the merchant.

Muzaffar and his friends cried out in stupefaction: "There is no power or might save in Allah! This ape knows secret things which are hidden from us; and all this is for Muhamad Lazybones, son of the cupper!" Soon after, they left the island of pearls and came before favouring winds to Bassora.

As soon as he disembarked, the sheikh Muzaffar came to knock at our door, and when my mother asked who was there, begged her to open, saying that he had returned from China. "Rise up, Lazybones!" cried my mother, "Muzaffar has returned from China. Open the door and welcome him. Ask him what he has brought you, for perhaps Allah means to satisfy our necessity through him." "Help me to get up," I said, and she did so. I shuffled myself somehow to the door, catching my feet in the skirts of my robe at each step.

When I opened the door, Muzaffar entered, followed

by his slaves. "Greeting and benediction upon him whose five dirhams brought luck to our voyage!" he cried, "Behold your profit, my son!" The slaves set down the sacks of pearls in our hall, while the old man gave over the gold to me and put the ape's cord in my hand. "This has all come from your five dirhams," he said, "Do not ill-treat the ape, my son, for he is an ape of benediction." So saying, the good old man departed.

As soon as we were alone, O Commander of the Faithful, I turned to my mother, saying: "This proves which of us two was right, my mother. You used to make my life a burden every day by bidding me rise up and work; and I would always answer that He who created me would feed me." "You were right, dear child," my mother answered, "Each man carries his destiny about his neck and may in no wise escape it." Then she helped me to count the pearls and to sort them according to their size and excellence. . . . After that, I put aside my laziness and went every day to the jewellers' market to sell my pearls. So great was my profit that I was able to buy land and houses, shops and gardens, palaces and slaves, women and boys.

The ape followed me everywhere, eating of my food, drinking of my cup, and never taking his eyes from me. One day, as we sat in my palace, he signed to me that he wished writing materials. I brought him pen, ink, and paper; he placed the paper on his left hand in the manner of scribes, plunged the pen into the ink, and wrote: "O Abu Muhamad, find a white cock and bring it to me in the garden." I at once procured a white cock and, running with it into the garden, saw the ape waiting for me, with a snake between his paws. He took the cock and set it on the snake, so that the two fought together, and the cock conquered the snake and

killed it. Then, as is not the manner of cocks, it ate the snake.

The ape took hold of the cock, tore out all its feathers and planted them one after another in the garden. Then he killed the bird and watered the feathers with its blood. Finally he cleaned the cock's gizzard and set it in the middle of the garden.

At this point, Shahrazade saw the approach of morning and discreetly fell silent.

*But When
The Six-hundred-and-seventy-first Night
Had Come*

LITTLE DONIAZADE said: "For pity's sake, dear sister, tell us what Abu Muhamad's ape did when he had planted the feathers in the garden and watered them with the cock's blood?" "Certainly," answered Shahrazade, and continued:

THEN THE APE stood before each of the feathers in turn, clicking his jaws and making little cries which I could not understand. Finally he squatted before me, gathering himself for a spring, and then leapt so high into the air that he disappeared for ever from my sight. At that moment all the cock feathers in my garden grew into gold trees with leaves of emerald and aquamarine, and bearing rubies and pearls and topaz in place of fruit. Also the cock's gizzard became this marvellous pavilion, which I make so bold as to offer to the khalifat, together with three of the trees.

As each stone of my new treasure was worth a ransom, I asked the sheriff of Bassora, the descendant of

our Prophet, for the hand of his daughter in marriage; and he granted my request, after he had seen my palace and garden. I live with my wife now in all health and happiness. I attribute my good fortune to my youthful confidence in the boundless generosity of Allah; for those who believe in Him shall lack nothing.

When the khalifat Haroun Al-Rachid had heard this tale, he marvelled and cried: "The favours of Allah are infinite, my son." He kept Abu Muhamad with him to dictate his story to the palace scribes, and only allowed him to leave Baghdad when he had loaded him with gifts and honours, whose magnificence fully equalled those which he had himself received. And yet Allah is more generous and more powerful!

When Shahrazade paused, King Shahryar said to her: "The moral of your story is an excellent one." "It is, O auspicious King," answered Shahrazade, "yet the tale is not to be compared with one which I have in reserve to tell you." And she said. . . .

